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Chair: Mr. Gunnarsson ..... (Iceland)
later: Mr. Idris (Vice-Chair) ..... (Eritrea)

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 28: Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/72/38)

(a) Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/72/93, A/72/134, A/72/207 and A/72/215)

(b) Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (*continued*) (A/72/203 and A/72/220)

1. **Mr. Jaime Calderon** (El Salvador), speaking on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), said that the States members of CELAC remained firmly committed to gender equality and the empowerment of women. Despite significant progress since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, much remained to be done. They were especially concerned about the feminization of poverty, persistent high levels of violence against women and girls and structural inequalities that perpetuated the cycle of poverty, marginalization and inequality.

2. The CELAC countries were committed to strengthening their national policies and laws on women's rights and empowerment. They were also committed to combating all forms of violence against women, including genital mutilation, forced marriage and human trafficking, as well as violence related to drug and sexual trafficking, organized crime and other forms of exploitation. They would continue to work to enhance women's economic independence and to guarantee their human rights, including their rights to quality medical care and education and to protection from gender-based violence.

3. The Community reiterated the importance of ensuring women's equal access to education and training, as well as access to maternal, sexual and reproductive health care and to decent, productive work, and recognized the vital role of men and boys as agents of change for achieving gender equality and empowering women. It attached particular importance to the protection of migrant and rural women and children.

4. Those countries were committed to overcoming the patriarchal stereotypes that perpetuated the unequal distribution of labour and ending the undervaluation and invisibility of "women's work". They also undertook to promote access to decent employment for all women, and would ramp up their efforts to develop women's full potential and to address violence and discrimination against them, with special attention to those who suffered multiple forms of discrimination.

5. CELAC recognized the important contribution of feminist organizations, women's movements and civil society organizations, as well as the need for strengthening and coordination. The CELAC countries had established a working group on the advancement of women. At the thirteenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, they had adopted the Montevideo Strategy for Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda within the Sustainable Development Framework by 2030, and they would soon meet in Havana, Cuba, for a session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin American and Caribbean Development marking its fortieth anniversary. They welcomed the recent regional consultations in Panama with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), as well as the resulting Declaration of Panama, which defined a regional approach to empowering women economically.

6. **Mr. Matjila** (South Africa), speaking on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), said that, in keeping with the principle of non-discrimination enshrined in the SADC founding treaty, its member States had committed in the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development to empowering women, eliminating discrimination and achieving gender equality and equity. More recently, they had taken steps to implement and mainstream those objectives through the SADC Programme of Action and Community Building Initiative and the SADC Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan.

7. However, despite those and other efforts, women, especially rural women, continued to face many challenges in their region, including with respect to access to and ownership of resources; social and economic exclusion; intersecting and multiple forms of discrimination; gender-based violence; inadequate investment in social protection and limited funding for women's economic empowerment. Furthermore, women and girls were disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS in Southern Africa, which remained at the epicentre of the epidemic. The member States were continuing the initiatives launched under the SADC HIV and AIDS Strategic Framework, which included condom promotion and distribution, campaigns to encourage HIV awareness and behavioural change, HIV testing and counselling, promotion of safe medical conditions, prevention of mother-to-child transmission, HIV treatment and home-based care.

8. Even working together, the SADC member States did not have the means to tackle all of the challenges facing Southern African women. They appreciated the support of their development partners and the international community and called for more and stronger partnerships for the advancement of women in the region.

9. **Ms. Adamson** (Observer for the European Union), speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Turkey, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania and, in addition, Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine, said that early and forced marriage, female genital mutilation, sexual harassment and physical and sexual violence against women remained widespread, and many women were leaving their countries to escape exploitation and violence. The international community must address the root causes of gender-based violence, including by enlisting the support of men and boys.

10. The European Union invested more in gender equality than any other entity. In September, during the launch of the European Union-United Nations Spotlight Initiative to end violence against women, it had pledged €500 million for the operations of the Initiative. It had recently signed the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, and it had taken over leadership of the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-based Violence in Emergencies. All European Union-funded humanitarian operations were required to conduct a gender analysis and emphasized full implementation of the women, peace and security agenda, pursuant to the European Union Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy. Furthermore, in accordance with the recently adopted European Consensus on Development, development assistance was increasingly being used to advance the rights of women and girls.

11. The European Union would continue to work with its partner countries to promote women's rights and to make institutions more transparent, participatory and accountable. Civil society organizations were also vital partners. It recognized the key role played by UN-Women in mainstreaming gender equality, empowering women and girls and eliminating violence against them and strongly encouraged further gender mainstreaming in the United Nations peace and security architecture.

12. **Ms. Morton** (Australia), speaking also on behalf of Canada, Iceland, Liechtenstein, New Zealand, Norway and Switzerland, said that those countries remained committed to Sustainable Development Goal 5 and would continue to emphasize gender equality as a cross-cutting goal of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Their delegations particularly welcomed the Secretary-General's efforts to achieve gender parity in the United Nations system, including through his new System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity, and they encouraged UN-Women and all United Nations agencies to continue to implement the System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. In the work ahead, it was essential for the United Nations to respond promptly to new challenges and for its Members to cooperate in ensuring that all of the relevant legal frameworks, political declarations and resolutions were properly implemented in every country.

13. **Ms. Nunoshiba** (Japan) said that Japan welcomed the System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity and would do its part to ensure implementation. At the national level, its first action plan to implement Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security was proceeding apace.

14. All development actors, including the United Nations, needed to pool their efforts to achieve the Goal 5 targets. With that in mind, Japan was continuing to ramp up its international cooperation and development assistance. In December 2016, at the World Assembly for Women, it had committed to providing more than $3 billion over three years for the promotion of women's participation and advancement in developing countries, and it had become the second largest donor to UN-Women. In July 2017, it had pledged $50 million to the new Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative (We-Fi). Every year since 2014, it had hosted the World Assembly for Women to discuss various aspects of women's empowerment with the world's top women leaders and other relevant stakeholders.

15. **Ms. Kirianoff Crimmins** (Switzerland) said that her country had recently adopted its first gender equality and women's rights strategy, confirming its strong commitment to the advancement of women. In view of the heavy burden of discrimination on rural women, efforts must be redoubled to strengthen their economic independence and their participation in rural development and decision-making. Switzerland was supporting projects at home and abroad to increase the presence and role of women in agricultural organizations and to raise public awareness of rural women's contribution to agriculture as well as the specific challenges facing them. Through its international development assistance, it was working to reduce rural women's unpaid labour by building infrastructure, improving water and sanitation systems and introducing innovative agricultural technologies.

16. Basic health care should include a full range of sexual and reproductive health services. Switzerland was determined to advance the political dialogue on that subject through a rights- and evidence-based approach.

17. **Mr. Arriola Ramírez** (Paraguay) said that his Government was working to ensure civil, political and social equality for women in accordance with the Paraguayan Constitution. Its third national plan on equalizing opportunities between women and men focused on equal access to political and social participation; decent jobs; education; comprehensive health care; a healthy, clean environment and freedom from violence. Paraguay had laws on breastfeeding, domestic labour and protection of women from violence, as well as public policies on rural women. Its chief conditional cash transfer scheme gave priority to women heads of household, and it would soon be establishing a centre exclusively for women that would provide comprehensive financial empowerment services, sexual and reproductive health care and violence prevention and support services.

18. It was necessary to address the structural factors undermining women's empowerment and rights and to respond appropriately to the needs of the most vulnerable groups of women. The States must demonstrate the political will to incorporate a gender perspective in their development plans and programmes and to implement measures strengthening women's participation at all levels of decision-making.

19. **Ms. Aanzi** (Netherlands) said that the World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report noted a widening gender gap in many countries, including in the Netherlands. Moreover, the Secretary-General's report on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (E/2017/66) indicated little progress on Goal 5. At the current pace, it would take over a hundred years to attain the Goal 5 targets. Closing the gap required opportunity, support and commitment: opportunity for women to develop and participate fully in society and long-term support and commitment from politicians, governments, employers, women and men. Indeed, the support and commitment of men was pivotal.

20. In 2017, women remained conspicuously absent in the upper echelons of business and government in the Netherlands. But, with opportunity, commitment and support, that could change in a generation. After all, thanks to quality education for all, her parents, who were illiterate Moroccan immigrants, had raised a family of successful university graduates.

21. **Ms. Cupellini** (Italy) said that real empowerment started with the eradication of every form of violence against women, including harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation and early and forced marriage. In 2017, Italy had given €1.4 million to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) core budget and €1.8 million to the joint programme of UNFPA and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) on the elimination of female genital mutilation. In July, it had hosted the BanFGM Conference on the campaign for a worldwide ban on female genital mutilation.

22. Under the ongoing Italian presidency of the Group of Seven (G-7), gender equality had been placed at the core of the G-7 agenda, and at the May summit, its leaders had adopted a road map for a gender-responsive economic environment. Italy would continue to promote gender equality within the Group, including by hosting the first G-7 ministerial meeting on equal opportunities in November.

23. In conflict and emergency situations, Italy made preventing sexual violence and gender-based violence a central focus of its own actions, and it contributed financially to bilateral and multilateral programmes aimed at protecting women's rights to health, safety and dignity in such circumstances. Migrant women, who were more exposed to violence, human trafficking and slavery, required particular attention.

24. Implementation of the women, peace and security agenda would continue to be a top priority for Italy during its term on the Security Council, where it had been a driving force behind the soon-to-be-launched Mediterranean women mediators network. At home, it had recently adopted its third national action plan on women, peace and security.

25. **Mr. Sauer** (Finland) said that women's and girls' rights continued to be violated on an unacceptable scale all over the world. The intersecting and multiple forms of discrimination against disabled women and girls were of particular concern. Guaranteeing their rights required a paradigm shift in social norms and attitudes that many States were far from internalizing. The right to individual autonomy was at the core of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and Finland was continuing to explore ways to promote the self-determination of disabled persons as full members of the community, in close cooperation with civil society.

26. The international human rights framework provided the tools for ensuring that women's and girl's rights were respected in both the public and the private spheres. What was lacking was action. In that regard, UN-Women was the exception. Since its establishment,

it had been a driving force in promoting normative change and advancing gender equality.

27. Finland was proud to be part of the SheDecides initiative, which was rolling out sexual and reproductive health services on a global scale. Denying girls the right to decide could have serious consequences. The leading cause of death of girls aged 15 to 19 was suicide, followed by pregnancy-related causes.

28. Many governments, including his own, were struggling to address violence against women and girls. One key challenge in Finland was the shortage of facilities and services for women who had experienced violence. As a HeForShe IMPACT champion, the President of Finland had personally committed to ending violence against women, promoting women's economic empowerment and implementing Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security.

29. *Mr. Idris (Eritrea), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

30. **Ms. Gan** (Singapore) said that Singapore had always prioritized the development of its people, who were its most valuable resource. Women enjoyed equal rights and robust legal protections. Almost all women aged 15 or older were literate, and more than 50 per cent of full-time university students were women. Moreover, women had made inroads in traditionally male-dominated professions such as engineering, medicine and politics. Singapore had recently elected its first woman president, and as of the most recent general elections, almost a quarter of the seats in Parliament were held by women. In 2016, Singapore had ranked eleventh out of 159 countries on the Gender Inequality Index.

31. In response to the underrepresentation of women in business leadership positions, her Government had established the Diversity Action Committee, which had set a target of 20 per cent women on corporate boards by 2020. To encourage women to enter and remain in the workforce, Singapore provided employment assistance and training and had implemented measures to promote work-life harmony and flexible work arrangements. It would continue to partner with individuals, companies and civil society to advance gender equality and women's empowerment.

32. **Ms. Treuno** (Mexico), speaking as a youth delegate, said that women and girls were being left behind. She was disappointed that the ministerial declaration adopted at the July session of the high-level political forum on sustainable development made no mention of women's human rights. If discussions similar to the Beijing negotiations were to be held in 2017, there would be no Declaration and Platform for Action. Such backsliding was unacceptable in a world where no country had achieved gender equality and women, especially vulnerable groups such as indigenous, refugee and disabled women, continued to suffer exclusion, marginalization, discrimination, violence and femicide.

33. Mexico rejected the false dichotomy between protecting sexual and reproductive rights and protecting families. Women's control over their own bodies went beyond sexual and reproductive health. It empowered them, to the benefit of their families and society.

34. Gender equality was a cross-cutting issue of the 2030 Agenda, and its 17 Goals could not be attained without women's participation. Mexico was investing in education for women and girls as well as in promoting equal political participation. However, to target public policies correctly, the Member States needed better gender-related data and statistics. They must continue working with UN-Women, the United Nations system and the regional mechanisms to improve statistical systems and data disaggregation.

35. **Ms. Salazar Mujica** (Peru) said that, in keeping with the cross-cutting focus on gender equality in the 2030 Agenda, her Government had mainstreamed gender equality across public institutions. It was implementing gender equality policies alongside a 2016–2021 national plan to combat gender violence. It was also promoting women's empowerment and access to financial products, technology, markets, procurement, skills development and social protection. For example, the State provided technical support to micro- and small enterprises for strengthening business networks, and it had enacted laws giving those enterprises official status and encouraging their development. Peru was committed to strengthening the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of national gender equality programmes and would incorporate a gender focus at all levels of public administration.

36. **Mr. García Moritán** (Argentina) said that his country's first national plan of action on violence against women (2017–2020) committed it to implementing programmes to eradicate gender-related violence and empower women and girls in every way, including through political and economic autonomy. Its gender polices sought to empower all women, but especially those affected by violence and multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.

37. In the context of implementing the 2030 Agenda, Argentina attached importance to exchanges of

experiences, international cooperation, cooperation with civil society and promotion of public-private partnerships. His delegation welcomed the decision of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women to revive the discussion on the adequacy of international, regional and national legal frameworks to prevent and combat violence against women, including with regard to the creation of a new legal instrument addressing violence against women, and it joined the Secretary-General in calling on States to ensure the realization of women migrant workers' human rights and to take rural women and girls into account when developing economic and social policies on education, health, employment and financial and digital inclusion. It also welcomed his new System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity.

38. **Ms. Kabia** (Sierra Leone) said that, as part of its National Action Plan on Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008), Sierra Leone had created a mechanism to ensure that gender equality received systematic attention and resources in its recovery, reintegration and reconstruction efforts. Its firm commitment to reducing the gender gap was illustrated by its enactment of a series of laws addressing gender-related challenges, its ratification of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, its efforts in areas such as maternal and child mortality and its free health care programme for pregnant women, lactating mothers and children under age 5, which had unfortunately been interrupted in 2014 by the Ebola epidemic. It looked forward to sustained cooperation and partnership in mobilizing the resources required to ensure progress at all levels. In view of the importance of building structures that promoted the advancement of women and prioritized inclusive and sustainable industrialization, technology transfer and market access, it appealed for the mobilization of increased official development assistance to fund implementation of the new development agenda and other internationally agreed agendas concerning women.

39. **Mr. Locsin** (Philippines) said that, with more than 5 million Filipino women working abroad, the promotion and protection of their rights was a top priority for his Government. A 2016 act amending the Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act placed greater emphasis on making welfare assistance, services and programmes for overseas workers gender-responsive, and participation of women migrant workers in policy-making bodies had been institutionalized. In 2016, more than 115,000 women migrants had received comprehensive repatriation services and reintegration preparedness training. Moreover, there was a dedicated fund for assistance to overseas Filipinos and a 24-hour hotline for victims of human trafficking, most of whom were women and girls. However, his Government was still seeking effective ways to prevent recruitment agencies from abusing migrant workers.

40. With respect to women's economic empowerment, the Philippines was providing technical assistance to more than 2,000 microenterprises to improve their competitiveness and sustainability. It also encouraged rural women to strengthen their negotiating positions by organizing, and it provided access to training and women-friendly equipment and technologies in rural areas. Furthermore, the agencies in charge of agrarian and agricultural reform were required to spend at least 5 per cent of their budgets on improving rural women's access to time- and labour-saving infrastructure and technologies.

41. **Ms. Yankssar** (Saudi Arabia) said that, to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, it was necessary to create an enabling environment for women and empower them socially, economically and politically. In line with the recommendations of the Secretary-General in his report on women and girls in rural areas (A/72/207), Saudi Arabia had established mobile rural clinics and had launched a remote employment initiative to make it possible for women to work at home. To discourage child, early and forced marriage, it had adopted laws empowering women to manage their own affairs and those of their families. It had set up a fund to provide pensions for women abandoned by their husbands, and women could now apply for government services unconditionally. Women had also recently been granted authorization to drive. Not only were women present in increasing numbers in the workforce, political office and foreign affairs, but they also occupied senior positions in finance, education and local government. In addition, the religious police force had begun forming an all-women unit.

42. Saudi Arabia decried the inability of Palestinian women to realize their human rights under Israeli occupation and oppression. It would cooperate fully with efforts to empower women, combat all forms of discrimination against them and improve their situation in accordance with Islamic law.

43. **Mr. Duque Estrada Meyer** (Brazil) said that the member States of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries were proud to have submitted the draft resolution on the full enjoyment of human rights by all women and girls and the systematic mainstreaming of a gender perspective into the

implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/HRC/36/L.12) adopted by the Human Rights Council at its thirty-sixth session. Brazil had launched several key initiatives for the empowerment of women, including a programme to foster more equitable working relations in the public and private sectors. To reduce and redistribute the burden of unpaid care work, it had recently adopted measures increasing paternity leave from 5 to 20 days and expanding support for breastfeeding mothers and breastmilk donation. It was endeavouring to promote women's economic autonomy, with particular attention to policies on poverty eradication, and to strengthen women's participation and leadership in politics as well as in decision-making bodies and positions.

44. Under its programme to combat violence against women, Brazil had established facilities providing comprehensive assistance to women victims of violence in each state and had expanded the women's health centres. It was also deploying mobile units to assist women facing violence in rural areas and was conducting continuous awareness-raising campaigns. In addition, it had long had police units specializing in crimes with women victims.

45. Last but not least, Brazil recognized the importance of fully engaging men and boys as allies in the empowerment of women and girls.

46. **Ms. Morton** (Australia) said that her delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity and urged UN-Women and all United Nations entities to continue their efforts to implement the System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.

47. Australia had a long-standing commitment to promoting and delivering sexual and reproductive health services and provided long-term funding for them. Although discrimination on the basis of sex, marital status or family responsibilities had long been illegal, Australian women did not enjoy the same employment opportunities as men and earned significantly less for equal work. In July, her Government had launched a strategy to shrink the gap between men's and women's participation in the labour market by 25 per cent by 2025.

48. At the international level, Australia's flagship gender equality programme, Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development, supported projects aimed at enabling women in 14 countries to participate fully, freely and safely in political, economic and social life. In South-East Asia, its Investing in Women initiative worked with business to improve employment practices for women and increase investment in women-led small- and medium-sized enterprises.

49. **Ms. Gonzalez Tolosa** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that her country had integrated a gender perspective into all of its public policies and was implementing policies and programmes to protect women's human rights and foster their participation in every aspect of national life. The legal framework for gender equality and equity had been expanded to provide unprecedented protection and was written in gender-inclusive, non-sexist language. Furthermore, the social investment budget, which accounted for three quarters of public spending, guaranteed funding for women's advancement. Gender parity had been achieved in primary and secondary education, and 60 per cent of university students were women. The percentage of women unemployed or employed in unpaid labour had shrunk from 16 per cent to less than 8 per cent, and 60 per cent of all pensioners were women. Household labour and family care were considered productive employment, and women working in informal sectors were included in the social security system. Domestic work was treated as a value-adding economic activity.

50. Her Government had taken steps to protect sexual and reproductive rights, improve maternity outcomes and discourage teenage pregnancy. In accordance with the organic law on the right of women to a life free from violence, it had developed policies guaranteeing legal and psychological services for women victims of violence.

51. However, women's rights could only be realized in a climate of respect, dignity, equality, non-violence and peace, and the only way to achieve peace was by preserving sovereignty, self-determination and respect for diversity.

52. **Ms. Plepytė** (Lithuania) said that real progress towards gender parity and women's advancement depended on wholehearted commitment and action at the national level. Lithuania regularly updated its national programme on equal opportunities for women and men and had recently made gender impact assessment mandatory for all governmental programmes, policies and legal decisions. In addition to causing physical and psychological harm, violence against women had direct and indirect costs for the victims and society. High quality comparable data on those costs would make it possible to measure the impact of violence and target measures for addressing it. Under the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence of 2011, Lithuania had adopted a results-oriented approach that included awareness-raising

campaigns, competence-building and cooperation with local institutions and civil society. It promoted equal sharing of household and childcare responsibilities by, inter alia, ensuring equal access to parental leave and the availability of quality childcare and dependent care services.

53. Lithuania was also an active advocate of gender equality at the international level. In May, it had hosted the first Asia-Europe Meeting on women's economic empowerment.

54. **Ms. Al-Nasairi** (Iraq) said that her country was preparing its periodic report for presentation to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in 2018. The Iraqi Constitution gave women the right to participate in public affairs, as well as to vote and to nominate, and the provincial election law set a minimum quota for women on provincial councils. Iraq had a personal status law that, inter alia, allowed mothers to transmit citizenship to their children, as well as laws establishing social protection for single and divorced women and privileges for working women. It had developed a women's advancement strategy and established a high-level office of women's affairs.

55. With respect to violence against women, the community police directorate had been equipped for rapid response to complaints of violence against women and domestic violence. It had also designated an annual national day for the elimination of violence against women. In cooperation with the Ministry of Finance, projects had been undertaken to empower rural women through micro-loans. Furthermore, following the defeat of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), it had come to the aid of women who had survived horrendous human rights violations.

56. **Ms. Likina** (Russian Federation) said that the Commission on the Status of Women had proven its effectiveness and should remain the primary body of the United Nations system for gender issues. Her delegation was pleased with the work of UN-Women over the past two years, including its recent adoption of a strategic plan for 2018–2021. However, it wished to reiterate that UN-Women must involve all groups of countries without exception and should be present and provide assistance on the ground solely at the request and with the permission of the State concerned; its role was one of secondary support only.

57. Her Government had mainstreamed gender issues in its recently adopted demographic and family policies and strategy for older people. Its 2017–2022 national strategy for women would be implemented by a coordinating council of representatives of the executive and legislative branches of government and civil society, which had met for the first time on 14 September to develop a plan for phase 1 of the strategy.

58. **Mr. Qassem Agha** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that, since the 1920s, women had been fully equal to men under his country's constitutions and laws, and their achievements had surpassed those of their counterparts in the region. In 1948, Syrian women had been the first in the region to gain the right to vote in parliamentary elections. The first woman member of parliament had been elected in 1975, and first woman speaker of parliament, in 2016. The vice president was also a woman.

59. Over the previous six years, Syrian women had borne the brunt of the most heinous forms of terrorism and extremism. Many had been killed by terrorists merely for having a Facebook account. Others had chosen suicide as an alternative to forced marriage or rape by terrorists, and hundreds of Syrian girls had been kidnapped and sold into slavery by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and the Nusrah Front. Syrian women had endured abysmal conditions in refugee camps and aboard the ships of death on the Mediterranean, which had become a source of income for Turkish mafias, and some were suffering under Israeli occupation in Palestine and the occupied Syrian Golan. It was high time for the countries involved in the war to stop supporting terrorism in Syria, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 2170 (2014) and 2178 (2014).

60. **Ms. Myo** (Myanmar) said that after decades of armed conflict and underdevelopment, Myanmar was determined to build a peaceful, prosperous and democratic society, which would be impossible without empowering women. With the support of the United Nations country team Gender Theme Group and more than a hundred civil society organizations, it was working to put gender equality and women's empowerment at the heart of its development strategies. The National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women 2013–2022 covered key aspects of the United Nations agenda for women's empowerment. In addition, improvements in health care and education would reduce maternal and infant mortality and increase access to education. With regard to rural women, Myanmar's National Community-Driven Development Project mainstreamed a gender focus, and it had recently launched the i-Woman Mobile Application, which was designed to connect, empower and foster leadership among rural women.

61. To tackle violence against women, her Government was drafting a law on the prevention of violence against women in cooperation with the Gender Theme Group. Because most victims of human trafficking in Myanmar were trafficked into neighbouring countries, it had signed memorandums of understanding on human trafficking with China and Thailand in 2009. It had also ratified the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Convention against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

62. **Mr. Sukhee** (Mongolia) said that, as mothers, wives, sisters and daughters, women could act as catalysts for change and development. Accordingly, Mongolia's Sustainable Development Vision — 2030 pledged to promote gender equality and empower women and girls. In 2017, it had revised its domestic violence law to criminalize domestic violence for the first time and had amended the Criminal Code and the law on victim and witness protection accordingly. Its gender equality law, which emphasized women's equal participation in all sectors and raised the quota for women at the political decision-making level, was backed by a national gender equality programme. Lastly, it had enacted a law on childcare services to support women's economic empowerment.

63. **Ms. Nguyen Lien** Huong (Viet Nam) said that her country had long recognized that successful development depended on women's participation in all spheres of life. In application of the Law on Gender Equality, her Government had incorporated gender equality consistently throughout the legal system and was implementing a national strategy. Progress thus far had been encouraging. The chair and a deputy chair of the National Assembly were women, as were ministers or deputy ministers in 15 out of 30 ministries. Gender quality had been achieved in secondary and higher education, and maternity leave had been increased from four to six months.

64. As one of the five countries most affected by climate change, Viet Nam was especially concerned about the impact of climate change on rural women, particularly poor rural women, who were less resilient to floods, storms and drought. Women played a large role in response, recovery and reconstruction, and one of the best ways to mitigate the impact of climate change on rural women was to enlist their support, develop their capacities and build their resilience to future disasters. Viet Nam would continue to champion the role of women in coping with climate change and looked forward to the support and assistance of the international community.

65. **Ms. Simpson** (United States of America) said that her Government considered empowering and promoting women in business an absolute priority and would continue to address the barriers faced by women professionals and entrepreneurs. In July 2017, it had pledged $50 million to the Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative, a new multi-donor facility that would expand access to financial services for women entrepreneurs and help them surmount gender-related barriers. The United States had collaborated with the private sector on initiatives linking women entrepreneurs with others in their regions, including Women's Entrepreneurship in the Americas, African Women's Entrepreneurship Program and Women's Entrepreneurship in APEC. It was a member of the Alliance for Artisan Enterprise, which provided support for many women artisans. It had also partnered with the private sector to establish business centres that helped women start, register and grow companies and, in some cases, engaged men and boys to prevent and respond to gender-based violence. In November, the United States and India would co-host the 2017 Global Entrepreneur Summit, on the theme "Women First, Prosperity for All".

66. **Mr. Rattray** (Jamaica) said that his country had the highest proportion of women managers in the world. Nevertheless, there were still inequities between men and women in both the public and the private spheres, and the advancement of women remained a top priority. Jamaica was a member of the Group of Champions of Women's Economic Empowerment. It was continuing to implement a national gender equality strategy aimed at mainstreaming gender in national development, and Parliament had recently resumed its review of four laws addressing violence against women. Jamaica had ratified several gender-related international instruments, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and three International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions. In that connection, it was planning legal reforms to protect informal workers and promote the formalization of their work in accordance with ILO Recommendation No. 204.

67. **Mr. Hattrem** (Norway) said that the most difficult job lay ahead: reaching the women bypassed by progress in health and education because they were poor, lived in rural areas, belonged to ethnic minorities or had disabilities. Gender had played an important role in Norway's journey from poverty to prosperity. In fact, working women contributed more to its economy than oil and gas. Equality was its most valuable investment, and it would be just as profitable for other

countries. The world's most gender-equal countries were also the most highly developed.

68. Norway had doubled its aid to global education over the preceding four years because investing in education, particularly for girls, was the most effective way of promoting sustainable development.

69. Child marriage was harmful for the child and harmful for development. No society could afford not to invest in its girls and include its women in the workforce. Violence against women also had enormous costs for both victim and society. Norway would never accept so-called traditional values as an excuse for denying women and girls their rights.

70. **Mr. Bukoka** (Zambia) said that, to accelerate attainment of Goal 5, his Government had promulgated the Gender Equity and Equality Act which, inter alia, established a framework for improving women's access to productive resources. It was also implementing the Girls' Education and Women's Empowerment and Livelihood Project, which would give girls from extremely poor families support for enrolment in secondary school and provide entrepreneurial training and business grants for vulnerable women. To speed prosecution and reduce the backlog of cases of gender-based violence, it had established two user-friendly fast-track courts, and it hoped to launch more soon.

71. Zambia had cut child marriage by 10 per cent thanks to a national campaign to end child marriage launched in 2013. It had also made some progress in reducing HIV prevalence in the adult population. To sustain that progress, his Government had rolled out a "test and treat" campaign aimed at universal testing and immediate treatment of those testing positive. Recognizing poverty as one of the underlying cause of HIV infection, it was implementing poverty reduction schemes such as social cash transfers, which targeted extremely poor households often headed by women.

72. **Ms. Khalvandi** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that her Government was continuing to work to create an enabling environment for women. Its development plan for 2016–2021 mandated a gender perspective in all government planning and programmes. Under a recent executive order, Cabinet ministers were required to set aside 30 per cent of decision-making and management positions for women. In addition, a bill on the protection of women against violence was under consideration, and work was being finalized on a strategic plan on the role of women and family, as well as one on sustainable development and women's sustainable employment.

73. Twice as many women as men were studying medicine and science, thanks to a 40-year emphasis on empowering women and girls through education. Furthermore, the number of woman-owned micro-enterprises and women's cooperatives had increased substantially, and the number of women's non-governmental organizations had tripled since 2013.

74. That progress had occurred against a backdrop of illegal, unilateral sanctions. Elsewhere in the Middle East, foreign intervention and occupation, military invasion and an upsurge in violent extremism and terrorism left little hope for achieving the goals for the advancement of women and girls or, for that matter, any of the other international development goals.

75. **Ms. Mejía Vélez** (Colombia) said that improving the situation of rural women and girls was a central concern of her Government reflected in the final peace agreement with Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC). Rural women, who had played a key role in ending the conflict and continued to be crucial for peace-building, would be given extra support in rural development programmes.

76. Noting that her delegation had spearheaded the formation of the Group of Friends for Gender Parity in the United Nations, she underlined the importance of the Secretary-General's recently released Strategy on Gender Parity and called on the Member States to work hand in hand to implement it.

77. **Ms. Abdelkawy** (Egypt) said that, in support of the declaration by the Egyptian president of 2017 as the year of Egyptian women, her Government had adopted the National Strategy for the Empowerment of Egyptian Women 2030, which sought to empower women in the political economic and social spheres, strengthen their role as leaders within the country and enhance social protections for women and girls. Women were increasingly being promoted to leadership roles in the Egyptian Government, civil service and judiciary, and Egypt had recently appointed its first female provincial governor and first female deputy governor of the Central Bank of Egypt.

78. The National Council for Women had held training sessions to promote women's participation in local council elections and, in cooperation with UN-Women, was helping women in remote areas to obtain national identity documents. The National Council on Women had, moreover, signed a memorandum of understanding with the Central Bank of Egypt with a view to promoting Egyptian women's full participation in the economy on an equal footing with men and ensuring that they received a decent

income. The National Council had also launched campaigns to combat discrimination and violence against women and provided financial support to women from marginalized groups. Egypt was also providing training to religious preachers so that they could more effectively address the issue of violence against women. The Ministry of Health had recently issued guidelines on women's health issues at all stages of their lives, including, those related to women's reproductive health.

79. A national conference on women as peacemakers, held in September 2017, had discussed the key role played by women in combating extremism and terrorism. The Office of the Public Prosecutor had, moreover, issued guidelines on offences involving violence against women, was drafting an amended family law, and had established an online portal through which members of the public could propose amendments to existing laws with a view to strengthening the legal rights of Egyptian women. Furthermore, an awareness-raising campaign, launched in early 2017 with a view to promoting tolerance, respect for women, girls' education, women's participation in politics and women's inheritance rights, as well as with a view to combating sexual harassment, underage marriage, female genital mutilation and all other forms of gender-based violence, had reached over one million Egyptian women and their families.

80. Egypt was convinced that bilateral and multilateral cooperation with its international partners could bolster its efforts to promote women's rights; Egypt would therefore continue to work closely with the United Nations, its specialized agencies and other relevant international organizations to achieve that noble goal.

The meeting rose at 5:55 p.m.

United Nations A/C.3/72/SR.9

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Seventy-second session

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Chair: Mr. Gunnarsson ..... (Iceland)
later: Ms. Al-Temimi (Vice-Chair) ..... (Qatar)

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 28: Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/72/38)

(a) Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/72/93, A/72/134, A/72/207 and A/72/215)

(b) Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (*continued*) (A/72/203 and A/72/220)

1. **Ms. Picco** (Monaco) said that it was unacceptable that one in three women were subject to physical or sexual violence during their lifetime. On the basis of statistics showing that perpetrators were often close relatives or acquaintances, Monaco had strengthened its Criminal Code and Code of Criminal Procedures in 2011 to target all forms of violence or threat of violence by persons who were living or had lived under the same roof as a victim. Health, care providers, police and the judiciary were trained to take victims' best interests into consideration. All victims of domestic violence who dialled free and confidential hotlines or applied to associations or shelters were protected and informed of their rights. To raise public awareness of violence against women, Monaco had organized a poster campaign in honour of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. Monaco was party to the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and had supported the francophone plan on violence against women adopted at the Commission on the Status of Women in 2013. At the regional level, it supported a multi-year agreement with partner countries of the south Mediterranean to protect women's rights and combat violence against women, domestic violence and violence against children.

2. Her delegation welcomed the importance attached to education in the joint European Union and United Nations Spotlight Initiative to eliminate violence against women and girls. Monaco had sponsored the Security Council resolutions on conflict-related sexual violence since 2008 and had recently signed a pact proposed by the Secretary-General on the elimination of exploitation and sexual offences during United Nations operations. With regard to human trafficking, Member States would be able to meet their commitments under the political declaration on the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking only by stepping up cooperation and information exchange and comprehensively applying the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

3. **Mr. Sisa** (Botswana) said that his Government reaffirmed its commitment to gender equality and the empowerment of women and to several major international and regional gender-related instruments, as well as to Sustainable Development Goal 5. In order to achieve those aims, it had, in addition to establishing the National Gender Commission, introduced measures and initiatives that addressed gender equality, economic empowerment of women, gender mainstreaming, legislation on gender-based violence and sexual harassment, and awareness-raising activities.

4. **Ms. Al-Emadi** (Qatar) said that the adoption of Sustainable Development Goal 5 on achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls reflected the acknowledgement that those objectives were intricately linked to development. To achieve Goal 5, which could accelerate implementation of the other Sustainable Development Goals, all relevant stakeholders must forge dynamic and constructive partnerships and redouble their collective efforts to ensure implementation of all commitments and instruments adopted by the international community to promote the status of women and girls.

5. Empowering women had long been a priority for her country, whose Constitution enshrined the principles of equality, justice and equal opportunity for all citizens. Women's empowerment and equality were addressed in all national plans and strategies, including the Qatar National Vision 2030, which called for empowering women to participate fully in the political and economic spheres, particularly in decision-making roles, strengthening social safety nets for women and girls and providing women with decent work opportunities. Qatar was, moreover, making every effort to uphold its commitments pursuant to regional and international instruments addressing the human rights of women, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Qatari women had been appointed to senior positions in Government, the judiciary, the diplomatic corps, academia, and the police and security forces. A woman had also been appointed to the post of deputy prosecutor general.

6. Qatar was convinced that the eradication of violence against women could accelerate development and help create safer and more harmonious societies.

To that end, it had established a number of specialized bodies that sought to combat such violence and offer protection to its victims and facilitate their reintegration into society. It was, moreover, an active participant in United Nations efforts to promote gender equality and had fully supported the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security, as well as the global study on the implementation of that resolution.

7. **Mr. Mahmadaminov** (Tajikistan) said that the Commission on the Status of Women was the main intergovernmental forum for promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and broadening women's participation in all spheres of life. Its sixty-second session in March 2018 would provide a timely opportunity to discuss challenges and opportunities related to gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls.

8. Tajikistan had been working closely with international organizations and civil society to implement its gender policy in accordance with its commitment to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. In 2013, it had adopted a law on domestic violence to protect the rights of family members and guarantee legal, medical and psychological assistance to victims of domestic violence. In 2014, it had adopted a programme on the prevention of domestic violence for the period 2014–2023. It was currently implementing a national strategy to enhance of the role of women for the period 2011–2020, aimed at creating an enabling environment for women's advancement in all areas of public life and training specialists in issues related to gender equality. As a follow-up to the strategy, it had developed an action plan which, inter alia, boosted job creation and supported women's entrepreneurship.

9. Sustainable Development Goal 6 on water and sanitation was closely related to gender issues. It was regrettable that progress in mainstreaming gender and empowering women in relation to Goal 6 had thus far been slow, despite the emphasis placed in General Assembly resolution 71/222 on the full participation of all stakeholders, including women, in the implementation of the International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development" 2018–2028 at all levels.

10. **Ms. Rodríguez Camejo** (Cuba) said that progress in the advancement of women had been fragile and insufficient. Women accounted for 70 per cent of the poor and two thirds of illiterate adults. Over 300,000 women died each year from avoidable complications during childbirth.

11. Cuba was proud of the progress it had made in the advancement of women. It had been the first country to sign the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Cuban laws guaranteed equal rights and possibilities for women, while the role of women in society and the family and traditional gender stereotypes were currently being reconsidered. Women received the same salary as men for work of equal value; were entitled to draw benefits if they became widowed, had disabilities or gave birth; could own land; and could take out loans. Women also had access to free education, which was vital for women's empowerment and the eradication of prejudices, discrimination and violence. Sexual and reproductive rights, including the right to abortion and freedom to choose the number and spacing of children, were guaranteed.

12. The Cuban Government reiterated its determination to continue developing its social model on the basis of justice, equality and solidarity, in strict compliance with international and regional treaties on the promotion of women. However, the elimination of violence against women required the elimination of all unilateral coercive measures. The economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed on Cuba by the United States was a form of violence inflicted on Cuban women and girls and therefore an obstacle to their advancement.

13. **Mr. Thammavongsa** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that the Lao Constitution enshrined a legal guarantee of equality between men and women in politics, the economy, culture, society and the family. To achieve the goal of gender equality, as contained in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and other international instruments, the Government had mainstreamed the empowerment and advancement of women into its five-year socioeconomic development plans; established the National Commission for the Advancement of Women; and approved the Development Plan for Lao Women to promote legal awareness among women, improve their education, skills, health and nutrition and create income-generating opportunities. Since those actions required adequate means of implementation, the Government had introduced an allocation on support for the empowerment of women in all public agencies and sectors into the 2016 national budget.

14. To ensure continued progress in the advancement of women, the National Commission had organized annual meetings to discuss the improvement of the overall organizational structure; the translation into reality of the 2030 Agenda; and the implementation of national strategies and actions plans on gender

equality, maternal and children's affairs and the prevention and elimination of violence against women. The Government remained committed to all international conventions on women empowerment and gender equality, especially the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

15. **Ms. Gebrekidan** (Eritrea) said that most Eritreans were rural dwellers who relied on agriculture, livestock and fishing for income. As women were so important to subsistence in rural households, the empowerment of women was therefore a critical aspect of the country's development policy. Since independence, public investment had mostly been directed towards improving social and economic infrastructure in rural areas, with the aim of narrowing the gap between urban and rural areas. The Government had also taken steps to grant women equal access to economic resources, including land, and to encourage women to stand for representation at local and regional land distribution committees. As a result, 30 per cent of newly allocated land was currently granted to women.

16. Eritrea had been working relentlessly to improve access to health care and education. The Government and civil society organizations had expanded prenatal and postnatal health coverage to reduce the maternal and infant mortality rates, making Eritrea one of the few African countries to have met its health-related Millennium Development Goals. Regarding education, the recent construction of portable water stations across the country had helped alleviate the need for girls to fetch water instead of attending school. Girls who commuted long distances to school were provided with free bicycles. To prevent school absenteeism, girls were provided with sanitary pads free of charge. To ensure that no child was left behind, boarding and mobile schools had been established in remote areas and for nomadic communities.

17. Despite the progress made, women in Eritrea continued to face enormous challenges. In rural areas, they had to deal with climatic effects, negative social attitudes and a lack of human and institutional capacity for implementing social programmes. Such external factors as regional insecurity, prevailing occupation of sovereign Eritrean territories and unjust sanctions had also had a significant impact on the lives of all women.

18. **Mr. Salam** (Lebanon) said that his delegation had noted with satisfaction recent efforts to increase women's representation at all levels of the United Nations system and to promote the gender perspective in all aspects of the work of the United Nations. Although there was increasing support for the principles of Planet 50-50 by 2030: Step It Up for Gender Equality, discrimination and violence against women and girls continued unabated in several parts of the world. Gender-based violence was a violation of every basic right, including sexual and reproductive rights, and hindered the participation of women and girls in their society and community as full and equal citizens.

19. Concerning his own region, he congratulated Saudi Arabia on its historic decision to waive restrictions prohibiting women from driving. Lebanon, for its part, was committed to the promotion and protection of women's and girls' rights, education for all, the elimination of discrimination and violence in all its forms and political and economic participation. The Lebanese Government worked closely with regional and international partners to achieve its gender-related goals, based on its commitment to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda. It had recently drafted a law on sexual harassment and removed a statute from the Criminal Code which had allowed rapists to avoid prosecution if they married their victims. Lebanon continued to raise awareness of early and forced marriage and to promote women's economic and political participation, especially in rural areas.

20. **Ms. Ancujar** (Dominican Republic) said that achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, especially Goal 5, depended on Member States' ability to continue meeting their commitments under the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. In the Dominican Republic, the 2030 National Development Strategy set gender equality as a fundamental right that should be mainstreamed in all policies. In that vein, in August 2017, the Dominican Republic had held a forum for all government departments on the significant role played by women in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the importance of Goal 5. The Government had adopted other policies regarding wage equality; the training of women in technology-related subjects; entitlement to paid parental leave; the elimination of sexual harassment and discrimination against women; and the promotion of employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for women. It upheld the belief that women's participation in the highest level of decision-making bodies would make public policies more inclusive and sustainable.

21. Adolescent girls from marginalized groups or living in poverty were less likely to receive secondary school education and ran a greater risk of exploitation, abuse and violence. Violence against women was,

however, a complex problem which usually stemmed from sociocultural, economic and educational issues. In response, the Ministry of Women and civil society organizations were developing a number of initiatives, including a 24-hour emergency hotline and shelters for women victims of violence. The Ministry also ran an educational and awareness-raising campaign to induce communities to take responsibility for the prevention of violence.

22. **Ms. Mwangi** (Kenya) said that the Kenyan Government had developed a road map for the achievement of Goal 5, identifying linkages with the Sustainable Development Goals on ending poverty, ensuring healthy lives, education and the promotion of inclusive sustainable economic growth.

23. The quality of a country's labour force largely depended on the performance of women as mothers, caregivers and custodians of family health and welfare. The Kenyan Development Strategy 2018–2022 outlined measures to redistribute and financially support unpaid social and community work, whose burden was borne primarily by women. The country's focus on maternal health had helped to reduce maternal mortality by 25 per cent between 2009 and 2014.

24. The Government valued the importance of education, especially of vulnerable girls. It ensured that young mothers who conceived while in school returned to schooling; had expanded its provision of sanitary towels; and had recently introduced free secondary school education. Given the large number of women working in agriculture, it ran training courses on gender and agriculture to give women greater access to and control over production resources. The Climate Change Act of 2016 stipulated that the national strategy on climate awareness should be gender-sensitive and provide men and women equal access to climate change funds.

25. The international community should prioritize the eradication of gender-based violence. In addition to its Domestic Violence Act of 2015, Kenya had launched a national campaign to raise awareness of the scope and impact of the problem. The Government was also developing a four-year programme with the United Nations to bolster prevention of gender-based violence, better protect victims and ensure expeditious prosecution of cases. Kenya also had a 24-hour helpline to provide victims with rapid access to relevant services, including referral after violation.

26. Regardless of the country's achievements, unacceptably high numbers of women bore the brunt of discrimination, poverty, unemployment, violence and HIV infection and lacked access to education and essential services. Women also contended with an unequal share of unpaid care roles, inflexible work options and outdated mindsets on women's leadership.

27. **Ms. Krisnamurthi** (Indonesia) said that gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls were fundamentally linked to sustainable development, and yet the potential of women and girls to contribute to and benefit from sustainable development as leaders, participants and agents of change had not been fully realized. The responsibility to bring about gender equality lay not only with individual men and women, but also with collective political and social institutions. Every society should have freedom to determine the best approach to the issue. Although quotas were a good starting point, it was also important to encourage the involvement of women in public life and promote the leadership capacity of women and girls.

28. Indonesia supported the Secretary-General's appeal for Member States to overcome entrenched prejudice, support engagement and activism, and promote gender equality and women's empowerment. It had established service centres for women and children victims of violence in all provinces and an increasing number of anti-trafficking communities. The current President, Joko Widodo, was a proponent of the HeForShe movement. His Government had launched the "3 Ends" programme to end violence against women and girls, trafficking in persons and barriers to economic justice. The programme, which focused not only on acts of violence but also contributing factors such as women's economic dependence on men, had increased community awareness, empowered women victims of violence and boosted underreporting of violence. To enhance women's economic empowerment, microloans were available to women owners of small and medium-sized companies. The Indonesia Women's Business Association, a business network for women, was also currently under development.

29. **Archbishop Auza** (Observer for the Holy See) said that his delegation welcomed the attention drawn to the situation of women and girls in rural areas, the scourge of violence against migrant women and collective efforts for the advancement of women. Whereas significant progress had been made in addressing gender parity among families of relative wealth, rural women and girls living in poverty still faced disadvantages in terms of schooling, literacy, and adult education and were therefore hindered from becoming dignified agents of their own development.

30. It was crucial to address the basic material needs of school-age girls in rural areas. The World Food

Programme partnership with local farmers, which provided meals to schoolchildren, was a positive example of integral development which not only satisfied material needs and reduced absenteeism, but also fostered education and increased market access for women. Young women in rural areas also bore the greatest burden when access to clean water and sanitation was not readily available. When families lacked access to safe drinkable water, girls were forced to neglect their studies to spend time collecting water, at the risk of being attacked.

31. The Holy See was deeply concerned by the global migration crisis and the vulnerability of migrant women and girls. Although the global community had a responsibility to welcome, protect, promote and integrate migrants and refugees, millions of women and girls often found themselves exploited by traffickers along perilous routes and even in host communities. His delegation strongly supported efforts by the international community to raise awareness of such issues and prevent the abhorrent violence perpetrated against migrant women and girls.

32. **Mr. Bastida** (Spain) said that Spain was a party to the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. Its lower house of parliament had recently passed an historic act containing measures to tackle gender-based violence and allocate 1 billion euros to the issue over the subsequent five years. The Government was currently completing its evaluation of the 2013–2016 National Strategy for the Eradication of Violence against Women and drawing up a new strategy for the period 2018–2022. It was also in the process of implementing the Strategic Plan for Equal Opportunities, a national road map for equality; the Plan for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men in the Information Society 2014–2017; the Plan for the Promotion of Women in Rural Areas 2015–2018; and the Plan for Equality between Men and Women in Public Administration Bodies.

33. In the international arena, Spain had assumed leadership of the women, peace and security agenda. Since the adoption of Security Council resolution 2242 (2015) on women and peace and security, Spain had coordinated a network of women, peace and security focal points which met regularly to discuss Member States' experiences of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). In July 2015, drawing on input from civil society, the Spanish Government had approved a relevant national action plan which would be subject to review and monitoring biennially. Spain had also recently joined the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-based Violence in Emergencies initiative and had presented Security Council resolution 2331 (2016) on human trafficking in conflict situations.

34. The inclusion of gender equality, gender-based violence and discrimination in the 2030 Agenda demonstrated that insufficient progress had been made in the advancement of women. Spain would therefore continue, both in its national capacity and in cooperation with multilateral human rights mechanisms, to fight for gender equality and the participation and leadership of women in political, economic, social and cultural life.

35. **Mr. Saikal** (Afghanistan) said that Afghan women were more involved in all aspects of life than ever before. A total of 69 members of parliament, 4 ministers, 9 deputy ministers and 5 ambassadors were women. In addition, women's access to education had improved markedly since 2001. The proportion of female students in primary and secondary schools had risen from almost zero to 40 per cent. A number of bodies had been established, including the Ministry of Women's Affairs, the Commission on the Elimination of Violence against Women, the Attorney General's Office for Violence Against Women and the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission. An anti-harassment law had been passed and the minimum age of marriage was in the process of being raised to 18 years.

36. The national action plan on Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security set out the need to support survivors of violence, engage boys and men in fighting violence against women, end impunity for crimes against women, increase female education and employment, and support civil society. The Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework recognized the importance of empowering women. Under the national priority programme for the economic empowerment of women, women-owned businesses would receive technical and financial support and training in job skills and financial literacy.

37. Despite such gains, Afghan women continued to be disproportionately affected by poverty, poor infrastructure, conflict and insecurity. While there was a long way to go, his Government was determined to promote and protect women's rights. The advancement of women was inextricably linked to the nation's social advancement and sustainable economic development.

38. **Ms. Abushawesh** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that while Palestinian society as a whole had suffered immeasurably as a result of the Israeli occupation, which was entering its sixth decade,

Palestinian women and girls faced additional gender-specific human rights violations. In her report on her mission to Israel (A/HRC/35/30/Add.1), the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences had said that particular challenges included violence against women by Israeli occupying forces and settlers, the construction and expansion of illegal settlements, home demolitions, the destruction of property and farmland, arbitrary detention and night raids.

39. In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, home demolitions and evictions continued unabated, forcibly displacing hundreds of civilians, including women. Home demolitions had a severe psychological impact on women and could cause anxiety and depression. Meanwhile, the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip was worsening, with devastating consequences for the human rights of Palestinian women living there. The Gaza Strip could soon become unliveable if the situation did not improve immediately.

40. The State of Palestine was committed to eliminating violence against women and implementing various programmes and projects. The Government had set up the National Observatory on Violence against Women, which was intended to guide decision makers regarding the amendment of laws and policies to ensure the protection of women. In addition, a 24-hour facility had been established in Ramallah where survivors of violence could receive essential services. However, in order to truly ensure the advancement of Palestinian women, the international community must redouble its efforts to hold Israel accountable for the crimes and violations committed and put an end to the occupation.

41. **Mr. Barros Melet** (Chile) said that his country welcomed the various reports of the Secretary-General, in particular his report on the improvement of the situation of women and girls in rural areas (A/72/207). Chile supported initiatives such as the voluntary compact on preventing and addressing sexual exploitation and abuse, the Senior Women Talent Pipeline and the System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity, as well as the creation of a Victims' Rights Advocate.

42. His Government had drafted a gender agenda, established a Ministry of Women and Gender Equity and was implementing an action plan on violence against women covering the period 2014–2018. Under the action plan, a bill had been brought before Congress on the right of women to a life free of violence. In addition, a law decriminalizing abortion in certain circumstances had been passed. As part of the country's electoral reform, a gender quota had been introduced. At least 40 per cent of congressional candidates and political party members had to be women. Chile was implementing its second national action plan on Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), which emphasized the importance of educating and training workers.

43. President Bachelet was the Co-Chair of the High-Level Steering Group of the Every Woman, Every Child initiative. At a high-level meeting held in Chile in July 2017, the Commitment to Action Santiago had been adopted, which was intended to advance the implementation of the Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health (2016–2030) and the Sustainable Development Goals in Latin America and the Caribbean.

44. **Ms. von Ernst** (Iceland) said that while the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women had achieved almost universal ratification, there were a high number of reservations, which affected its potential to be an effective tool. Some reservations were incompatible with the objective of the Convention and should be scrutinized and withdrawn, or at least made more specific.

45. The participation of women and girls was key to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Women and girls must have equal access to education, jobs, property and decision-making. However, gender equality would not be achieved if it were only discussed among women. Men, in particular those with the power to change gender norms, must be actively engaged in the fight for gender equality. The Prime Minister of Iceland was a HeForShe IMPACT Champion and Iceland had organized a number of conferences and meetings with a view to engaging men in leadership positions.

46. For the eighth year in a row, Iceland was the top performing country with regard to gender equality, according to the Global Gender Gap Index, yet complete gender equality had not been achieved, with Icelandic women still earning less than men. However, her country had pledged to eradicate the gender pay gap by 2022. In June 2017, Iceland had become the first country in the world to require companies and institutions with over 24 staff to obtain a certificate proving that they paid all employees the same amount, regardless of gender, ethnicity, sexuality or nationality. Noting that the Equal Pay Standard had been developed in accordance with international standards

and had the potential to be used universally, she called on all States to commit to achieving equal pay for all.

47. **Ms. Ashipala** (Namibia) said that there were many causes of gender-based violence, including harmful gender stereotypes, societal norms and economic dependency. The Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare was undertaking advocacy work with a view to empowering women and girls and helping them to identify and address abusive situations. It was also raising awareness through initiatives such as a media campaign on zero tolerance for gender-based violence. In addition, the Government carried out outreach through an annual campaign entitled "16 days of activism against gender-based violence", which was organized in collaboration with civil society.

48. Stiffer sentences had been introduced for perpetrators of gender-based violence, and victims received comprehensive support and assistance. However, many victims did not come forward. Under the Fifth National Development Plan, Namibia had pledged to enhance the financial and human capacity of service providers with a view to providing integrated prevention, protection and response services for victims of gender-based violence.

49. Noting the importance of economic empowerment for ending gender-based violence, she said that her Government was committed to eradicating poverty; promoting the economic advancement of women, in particular those from rural and marginalized communities; ensuring that women could secure decent and productive employment; promoting female entrepreneurship; and enhancing women's access to and control over productive resources and assets. The National Policy on Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises was intended to improve the business environment in both the formal and informal sectors, while the Income-Generating Activity Fund provided grants in the form of materials and equipment. Laws and policies had been introduced to ensure that women could enter the workforce and received equal benefits. Lastly, her Government had launched a number of initiatives to boost economic opportunities for women in rural areas, such as support setting up small businesses.

50. **Mr. Perera** (Sri Lanka) said that women and children had been the main victims of the long conflict in Sri Lanka. The question of female-headed households was a key challenge, as research had shown that they were vulnerable to poverty, violence and social exclusion owing to a lack of opportunities and access to services. Together with the United Nations, his Government had launched multiple programmes to address the issues faced by female-headed households, such as safety and reproductive health. A study had been carried out to collect up-to-date data on female-headed households, the nature of current interventions and implementation gaps. The Ministry of Women and Child Affairs was working to implement the recommendations of the study.

51. Sri Lanka recognized the positive contribution that women could make as agents of reconciliation and peacebuilding. The Consultation Task Force on Reconciliation Mechanisms was chaired by a woman and the majority of its members were women. One of its key recommendations, which the Government was committed to achieving, was the need to equip women with the skills to participate in peacebuilding activities.

52. Women must be fully involved in disaster management. Women, in particular expectant mothers, were vulnerable during and after natural disasters, as health-care facilities were often compromised. During the recent floods, the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs and non-government organizations had engaged more women in relief work, giving them responsibilities such as distributing dignity kits, holding awareness-raising sessions on gender-based violence and running mobile medical clinics. In that connection, the Government had increased its efforts to equip women with disaster preparedness and leadership skills.

53. *Ms. Al-Temimi (Qatar), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

54. **Mr. Fialho Rocha** (Cabo Verde) said that rural women and girls had an important role to play in economic growth, agricultural production, food security and nutrition, land and natural resource management and climate resilience. The needs of rural women and girls, which included high-quality education and health care, anti-poverty development projects and access to decent work in the agricultural sector, must be addressed through comprehensive and well-funded policies and positive discrimination.

55. Underlining its deep-rooted commitment to promoting women's rights, he said that his Government was implementing bold policies and strengthening its institutional capacity and legal framework with a view to ensuring universal access to education, improving family planning, expanding access to reproductive health care and safeguarding reproductive rights. With regard to the legal framework, the authorities were striving to promote gender parity by increasing the involvement of parliament and governmental and non-governmental organizations.

56. The authorities were also broadening political participation and leadership to ensure that women were better represented in decision-making positions, and paying particular attention to women and girls in vulnerable situations, such as migrants and female heads of household. The National Plan for Gender Equality, the National Plan to Combat Gender-based Violence and a special fund for victims were all important tools. In addition, the Gender Equality Observatory provided reliable statistics and data, which helped the Government to implement regional and international human rights instruments and monitor progress made and implementation gaps.

57. **Mr. Shakirov** (Kazakhstan) said that it was necessary to link women's advancement and pivotal issues contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Women must be empowered to serve as agents of change and be engaged in key United Nations processes. Inequities in education, employment, marriage, parenthood, reproductive health and political participation must be addressed through global policy directives and long-term macro strategies. In that connection, his country supported the work of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) Multi-Country Office in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

58. Kazakhstan had progressive gender-oriented policies and programmes, underpinned by the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Beijing Platform for Action, among other instruments. The National Commission on Women's Affairs, Family and Demographic Policy was responsible for introducing and amending legislation and monitoring policies and strategies on child protection, reproductive health, maternal mortality, disease and obstetric fistula. His Government had intensified efforts to eliminate violence against women and girls, including domestic and sexual violence, by implementing a joint technical support programme with United Nations agencies based in the region. The results of the programme, which would be announced in late 2017, would inform future measures to eliminate such violence.

59. Kazakhstan was committed to ensuring women's political participation and economic empowerment. Women accounted for 57 per cent of university graduates and held 55 per cent of State public offices and 27 per cent of parliamentary seats. They contributed 40 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) and accounted for over 48 per cent of the workforce. The country had successfully implemented a10-year national action plan on gender equality covering the period from 2006 to 2016 and was due to adopt a new national policy on family and gender in 2017.

60. **Mr. Zambrana** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) said that his country's Constitution contained a number of provisions on gender equality. For example, under the Constitution, women could not be discriminated against on the basis of their marital status, age, appearance or the number of children they had, and pregnant women and mothers of children under one year of age could not be fired. Other important measures included a ground-breaking Act that criminalized political violence and harassment, and an Act which guaranteed women a life free from violence, recognizing 16 types of violence against women and establishing prevention and protection measures and sanctions.

61. Thanks to the efforts of his Government and an Act on the electoral regime, women held 67 seats in the Chamber of Deputies and 16 in the Chamber of Senators, up from a combined total of just one in 1982. In 2016, his country had invested 187 million bolivianos in the Juana Azurduy voucher programme, which was intended to lower maternal and child mortality and chronic malnutrition in children under the age of 2. In order to benefit from the programme, mothers had to go for regular medical check-ups.

62. Gender equality was not only a human right, but also a means of achieving sustainable peace and development. In that connection, his country called for the creation of a specific covenant on the empowerment and inclusion of women in accordance with Goal 5, with a view to achieving gender equality and ensuring the full and effective participation of women and girls and their access to leadership and decision-making positions.

63. **Ms. Al Jabri** (United Arab Emirates) said that her Government had strengthened the country's policies and laws with a view to enhancing the status of women in society and promoting respect for their rights, in line with its obligations pursuant to relevant international instruments, including the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

64. To that end, her Government had, inter alia, adopted legislation providing for wage equality for men and women, as well as laws to protect women from all forms of violence. Furthermore, the General Women's Union and the Gender Balance Council were formulating strategies and policies to empower women and achieve gender equality in all sectors of the economy

65. Her country was also striving to increase the number of women in leadership and decision-making positions. Women held some 27 per cent of positions in Government and some 30 per cent of decision-making positions in the public sector. Furthermore, by promoting girls' education, her country had successfully closed its education gender gap, including at university level. The United Arab Emirates was also seeking to foster safe and supportive working environments for women and had amended the regulations on maternity and post-delivery leave to facilitate women's participation in the workforce.

66. The United Arab Emirates fully supported the women and peace and security agenda and had made women's empowerment a foreign policy priority. It was also a strong supporter of the Every Woman, Every Child initiative to reduce maternal and infant mortality, as over 50 per cent of such fatalities took place in fragile humanitarian situations and were thus preventable. It commended the work of UN-Women and welcomed the adoption of the UN-Women Strategic Plan 2018–2021. The United Arab Emirates continued to provide technical and financial support to UN-Women and hosted the UN-Women Gulf Liaison Office, which would support implementation of the Strategic Plan and the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 5 in the Middle East region.

67. The United Arab Emirates was convinced that achieving gender parity in leadership positions in the United Nations would facilitate the work of the Organization. It was, moreover, necessary to step up efforts to incorporate a gender perspective in all United Nations programmes.

68. **Mr. Tupouniua** (Tonga) said that in addition to being a major part of one of the Sustainable Development Goals, the advancement of women was crucial to the achievement of the Goals overall. His delegation welcomed the work of the Secretary-General towards gender parity at the United Nations, which included the appointment of the first woman from Tonga and the Pacific Islands region at the Under-Secretary-General level.

69. In his country, more women were now participating in the labour force, and made up a larger proportion of the recipients of scholarships and training. In addition, women constituted a significant percentage of the heads of Government ministries, diplomatic missions and consular posts, as well as leaders of non-governmental organizations and trade unions. Some 10 women were also running as candidates in the upcoming national elections, more than ever before.

70. In the interest of ending violence against women, his Government had entered into a partnership with UN-Women, resulting in the Ending Violence Against Women Programme. The Programme was further supported by the Government of Australia, for which his delegation expressed its gratitude. His Government would continue its collaboration with those and other institutions to advocate ending violence against women, provide policy guidance and work to prevent violence in the most cost-effective and sustainable way.

71. **Mr. Mendoza-García** (Costa Rica) said that the National Policy on Gender Equality and Equity was intended to promote the concept that care work was a shared social responsibility, help women to secure decent employment, improve education and sexual and reproductive health, combat violence against women and promote equal political participation. Unlike previous policies, it recognized that women spent more time than men carrying out unpaid and reproductive work. It was important to acknowledge the value of such work and reduce the burden on women so that they could secure productive employment. Costa Rica had expanded its care network programme, tripling the number of centres and providing dedicated centres for indigenous communities that were respectful of their traditions. As a result, many more children had access to education and care, enabling their mothers to join the workforce.

72. A policy had been introduced to combat all forms of violence against women, in particular femicide, by changing social roles, reducing impunity and improving protection for women. Victims of gender-based violence should have access to social programmes that fostered their economic independence, with a view to breaking the cycle of poverty and violence. In addition, his Government was working with children and young people to promote cultural change by encouraging them to eschew violence, educating them about sexual and reproductive rights and teaching them to be respectful and sensitive to peoples' differences.

73. His Government's efforts to promote the economic advancement of women were based on the recommendations of the High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment. Ensuring women's economic empowerment was the key to achieving gender equality and the Sustainable Development Goals. At a meeting of the Panel in September 2017, the Secretary-General had noted that if women were able to participate equally in the economy, global GDP could increase by 26 per cent, the equivalent of $12 trillion, by 2025. Costa Rica was committed to ensuring that women had

access to paid employment opportunities, eliminating the gender pay gap and achieving true gender equality across the board.

74. **Ms. Kipiani** (Georgia) said that gender equality, the empowerment of women and gender mainstreaming were among the top priorities of her Government, which had carried out reforms and made significant progress. Legislative amendments had been introduced to bring domestic laws into compliance with international standards such as the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, and acts of violence, including stalking, forced sterilization and female genital mutilation had been criminalized. The legislative package passed by the Parliament had fully responded to the recommendations made by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and other relevant bodies. Another step that had been taken was the establishment of the Inter-Agency Commission for Gender Equality and Ending Violence Against Women and Girls, which comprised expert groups working on the issues of human rights, domestic violence, and women, peace and security. The Government had also elaborated, and begun implementing, legal frameworks and action plans concerning those issues in the context of relevant Security Council resolutions.

75. Her country was strongly committed to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and in order to support the implementation of Goal 5, special efforts had been made to ensure that all of the Goals had gender-sensitive indicators as they were incorporated in her country.

76. Her Government was also committed to the promise of leaving no one behind during the implementation of the Agenda, but women living in the occupied regions of Georgia, where no international monitoring missions were allowed, were deprived of basic needs, decent work, and access to social protection, education and medical care. Unfortunately, barbed-wire fences and other artificial barriers along the occupation line seriously impeded their freedom of movement.

77. **Mr. Uğurluoğlu** (Turkey) said that his country was committed to improving living standards and the rights of women and girls, and that the equality of women and men was one of the basic principles of the Constitution. His Government had undertaken several efforts towards upholding the rights of women, including supporting the work of the Committee on Equality of Opportunity for Women and Men and the establishment of a UN-Women regional office in Istanbul.

78. His Government took very seriously the issue of violence against women, and, demonstrating that commitment, it had contributed to the elaboration of the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and had been the first country to sign and ratify it. In 2016 it had also begun the National Action Plan on Combating Violence Against Women 2016–2020, which included monitoring and assessment requirements which were binding and which assigned greater responsibility to relevant institutions. A number of other support mechanisms had also been established, such as shelters for women who were victims of violence, counselling centres and hotlines. In the context of humanitarian action, his Government was pleased to see that gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls had become an overarching theme for commitments, and was currently providing for all humanitarian, health and education needs of millions of women and girls under temporary protection in Turkey who had fled the devastation in their home countries. In temporary protection shelters the Turkish authorities had, in cooperation with international partners, also taken steps to enable a gender-sensitive environment, and resolutely undertook to prevent human trafficking of those women and girls seeking safety and security. They would have an important role to play in shaping the futures of their respective countries.

79. **Mr. Shingiro** (Burundi) said that despite difficult circumstances due to recurring conflicts in his country, his Government had taken steps to improve the participation of women in political life, and had prioritized several national action plans and strategies addressing gender, gender-based violence and poverty reduction. Women currently occupied more than 30 per cent of the positions in the Government, and held posts up to the level of General in the defence and security sectors. It was understood that the elimination of poverty among rural women would be impossible unless they were able to fully participate in the economic and political life of the country. Therefore the Government had established a fund to finance microcredit for women in associations for the development of income-generating activities.

80. In 2016 a law addressing sexual violence had been adopted, and legislative measures to strengthen the punishment of perpetrators of crimes against women were also already in place. Government policies to reduce discrepancies between girls and boys in education had produced results and parity had been achieved. His Government was endeavouring to find

solutions to the problem of students dropping out of school, which was linked in part to family economic factors and premature pregnancies. In the area of public health, the expansion of health care infrastructure and subsidies for children younger than five years and mothers at childbirth had reduced infant mortality and maternal morbidity. With regard to employment, recruitment in the defence and security forces had opened up more jobs for women that had previously been occupied only by men, while at the same time, the Government also encouraged women to participate in import and export, cross-border trade and other diversified businesses. Finally, the number of women participating in peacebuilding work in his country had grown, thanks to the support of UN-Women.

81. **Mr. Ajayi** (Nigeria) said that women played a vital role in the quest to diversify the global economy and implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; no country could achieve its full potential without harnessing their competencies. His Government had launched several campaigns and established funds to support their equitable integration into the economy and the political environment. It had begun revising discriminatory laws and practices so that women would be better protected against sexual and gender-based violence; an important component of that effort was the sensitization of men and boys to true gender equality and the well-being of their female counterparts. The new gender-responsive budgeting model was applied to gender-specific expenditures and had already had positive effects on millions of people. The Women's Fund for Economic Empowerment provided soft loans to female entrepreneurs to expand their businesses and improve skills and knowledge, while the Rural Finance Institution Building Programme boosted income and living conditions, especially for households headed by women.

82. In addition, a series of irrigation projects, credit guarantee schemes and dedicated funds had been established to improve access to natural resources in rural areas, guarantee loans issued to farmers for agricultural production, and support access to microcredit at the community level across the country. A national science education policy was also being implemented to encourage girls to study scientific subjects, and an expanded range of scholarships was being offered to enable more women to receive training to become commercial pilots, pharmacists and medical doctors. With more women working in the medical field, it was to be hoped that the negative attitudes towards girls' education that were pervasive in some parts of the country would be diminished.

83. His delegation called on the global community to emphasize programmes and policies that advanced the rights and welfare of women and girls, just as his Government would continue to do.

84. **Ms. Rasheed** (Maldives) said that the advancement of women could happen only when policy statements were translated into focused and meaningful action. To that end, her Government had undertaken such projects as the Gender Equality Act and action plans to further increase women's participation and advancement in society. At the leadership level there was still a long way to go, which was a consequence of prevailing cultural and traditional norms. However, efforts by the Government to increase the number of women serving in leadership positions in Government agencies, commissions and State-owned enterprises had borne results. For instance, many more women now held local and atoll council seats than in the past. The Government had also introduced special loan schemes for women, which provided easier access to funding for small- and medium-sized enterprises and allowed training and workshops to be held at the island level to make the workforce more inclusive. In the area of education, her country had made remarkable achievements, having already reached gender parity in enrolment and the completion of primary and secondary schooling.

85. Her country had enacted stringent laws and policies against sexual and gender-based violence, one of the most prevalent violations of human rights. Laws covering domestic violence, sexual harassment, sexual offenses and marital rape had been enacted over the previous few years, though the Government recognized that the cultivation of a culture of gender empowerment was also necessary in order to reap the full benefit of legislative interventions.

86. Her delegation supported the call of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its cause and consequences for a global implementation plan on violence against women. The lack of full incorporation and application of international norms posed a great challenge to addressing gender-based violence against women. The international community should promise to take more concrete steps to champion gender equality in the respective countries, empower women and girls to choose their own paths in life, and ensure that they were at the table when decisions were being made.

87. **Ms. Flores Herrera** (Panama) said that the National Women's Institute, which had been established in 2008, had been strengthened through various initiatives. The United Nations Development

Programme had helped to restructure the Institute in line with gender equality legislation and policies, with a view to making it more effective. The Institute had succeeded in getting the Government to adopt a gender equality pact, which had been years in the making. The pact called for the introduction of gender-equality policies in the private sector with a view to closing the gender gap in the workplace. Noting the important role of the private sector in meeting the Sustainable Development Goals, she said that achieving gender equality would make businesses more competitive.

88. Her Government had taken a number of practical steps to promote gender equality. Pursuant to Act 56 of 2017, at least 30 per cent of directors on the boards of State entities and regulated companies had to be women. Panama was playing a leading role in the Equal Pay International Coalition, an initiative of UN-Women, and had been selected to launch and promote the initiative at the regional level. Her country had adapted its legislation and made a firm political commitment to preventing violence against women. Prior to the sixty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women, a regional consultation for Latin American and Caribbean countries had been held in Panama in February 2017, leading to the adoption of the Declaration of Panama.

89. **Mr. Kang** Sangwook (Republic of Korea) said that his delegation commended the efforts of the Secretary-General to achieve gender parity across the United Nations system, which could serve as a good example to emulate. His Government was working to mainstream gender equality across Korean society, and had undertaken several relevant initiatives. A number of female ministers had been appointed, for instance, thus meeting the target of 30 per cent of cabinet members being women, while the needs of women and girls would continue to be prioritized in international development cooperation. Sexual violence in conflict was a serious violation of women's dignity and human rights, and his Government would spare no effort to prevent such heinous crimes and assist victims.

90. On the basis of the understanding that women should be agents of peacebuilding and peacekeeping, his country had contributed to the work of UN-Women, the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Support Office, and as Chair of the Commission during the current year, his delegation would seek to better reflect gender perspectives in its activities.

91. **Ms. Kanjanasoon** (Thailand) said that gender equality and the empowerment of women were indispensable components of sustainable development, and efforts made to those ends would accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Her Government was committed to gender parity and the mainstreaming of gender perspectives into policymaking at all levels, and continued to improve domestic legislation and programmes in order to implement international instruments and documents such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

92. In accordance with commitments made by the Prime Minister in 2015, her country had made progress in developing gender-sensitive educational curricula, collecting sex-disaggregated data and promoting gender-responsive budgeting. Women accounted for 64 per cent of the workforce, and although they generally enjoyed the same levels of pay as their male counterparts, marginalized groups such as women with disabilities and rural and migrant women still faced challenges and risks of abuse and exploitation. Legal protections and economic and social policies had therefore been put in place to assist them.

93. In view of the major role that women entrepreneurs played in Thai society, the Government had been working with major financial institutions in the country to improve access to financing for women entrepreneurs involved with small- and medium-sized enterprises, micro-enterprises and start-up technology companies. It also supported the recommendations contained in the 2017 report of the United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment. The representation of women in Government institutions at the executive level and in local administrative bodies still needed to be increased, and efforts would be made in that regard. In the area of peace and security, her Government was currently finalizing a set of national guidelines to strengthen the role of women in preventive diplomacy and conflict situations.

94. In order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, the problem of gender inequality needed to be addressed at its roots, and all of society must work together to change discriminatory values and attitudes. Her delegation welcomed the efforts of United Nations agencies, the Secretary-General, Member States, and non-governmental sectors.

95. **Mr. Alghareeb** (Bahrain) said that said that his country was striving to uphold its obligations pursuant to international instruments on women's rights, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. In 2017, Bahrain had amended its family law with a view to strengthening legal protections for Bahraini families

and enhancing family cohesion, and was updating its legal framework to entrench the principle of gender equality for men and women in terms of their rights and duties.

96. As part of its ongoing reform process, Bahrain had established the Supreme Council for Women, which brought together representatives of relevant governmental bodies and civil society organizations and had been entrusted with formulating and putting in place national plans and policies for improving the situation of women in the country. The Supreme Council for Women was overseeing implementation of the National Plan for the Advancement of Bahraini Women 2013–2022, which sought, inter alia, to promote family stability, ensure equal opportunities for women and men, encourage lifelong learning for women and improve women's quality of life. In March 2017, the Supreme Council had launched a global award for women's empowerment.

97. Bahrain had also launched programmes to promote the economic empowerment of women and increase their participation in the labour market. Women had comprised 33 per cent of the country's workforce in 2014 and held 51 per cent of public sector jobs. They had also comprised 38 per cent of entrepreneurs, 74 per cent of teachers and academics, 55 per cent of lawyers, 37 per cent of doctors and 25 per cent of engineers. Women also comprised a high proportion of workers in the country's finance and banking sectors. Furthermore some 61 per cent of university graduates in Bahrain were women.

98. **Mr. Ntonga** (Zimbabwe) said that in his country, the role of women as caregivers in the family was a burden to them, restricted their free time, and propelled them towards soft, low-paid sectors and occupations. The majority of women in Zimbabwe and elsewhere in Africa were employed in either the agricultural or the informal sector and had limited access to education and consequently possessed fewer of the skills required for the job market. His Government had made several legislative, policy and administrative changes to ensure gender equality and the economic empowerment of women. The Zimbabwe Gender Commission had been established to monitor the implementation of gender-related laws, policies, and regional and international instruments, and to encourage policies that promoted gender equality and women in leadership positions. The Domestic Violence Act addressed gender-based violence and provided for relief for and protection of victims of such violence. A programme for land reform and resettlement had reserved a quota for women to apply for agricultural land under smallholder and commercial farming schemes, enabling more women to own land. A women's microfinance bank would provide financing to women at concessionary rates and flexible terms not afforded by conventional banks due to a lack of collateral. The National Gender Policy prioritized equal access to and control and ownership of media and information and communications technologies. The Government had outlawed statutes, traditions, customs and cultural practices that infringed upon the rights of women as provided for by the Constitution, and gender focal points had been appointed in all Government ministries to facilitate the gender mainstreaming process.

99. **Ms. Sukkar** (Jordan) said that her Government had submitted its sixth periodic report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in 2017. Several legislative amendments had been adopted, including a law to increase the percentage of Parliament seats allocated for women, a law on decentralization, an amendment to the military retirement law to give women equal rights in appointment and career advancement, a regulation on shelters for women in danger, and a law to provide protection from domestic violence. On the occasion of International Women's Day, a new by-law on flexible working hours came into effect, benefiting women and men and aiming to boost economic participation in society by workers with family responsibilities, with disabilities or attending university. The national health sector database had been updated, and comprehensive sex-disaggregated data on the improvement of the situation of women was being prepared.

100. Several Government ministries, departments and units were cooperating with additional partners to combat violence in all its forms, including sexual violence and trafficking, and to offer support, shelter, rehabilitation, education, health care, legal services and protection to victims. Another achievement was that the article of the penal code that had allowed a perpetrator of sexual assault to marry his victim to escape punishment had recently been abolished.

101. Her Government sought to increase women's participation in all areas of decision-making, and had conducted several capacity-building programmes for women in middle management positions in the public sector since 2015.

102. **Ms. Elmansouri** (Tunisia) said that gender equality was not only an inalienable right, but also a vital component in building a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world in which no one was left behind. Its attainment should serve as motivation for the international community to combat all forms of marginalization, stigmatization and violence against

women. Her country had made many efforts for the betterment of women, including the promulgation of the Code of Personal Status and the 2014 adoption of the Constitution, which guaranteed the principle of equality and required the State to protect the rights of women and take measures necessary to eliminate gender-based violence.

103. In July the Parliament had unanimously adopted a comprehensive law concerning violence against women, the first of its kind, which promoted the empowerment of women by way of concrete measures to combat economic, sexual, political and psychological violence against them. Gender aspects had been incorporated into various development initiatives, including the formulation of a national policy to advance gender equality in professional development, education and other areas. Partnerships between the public and private sectors and civil society had enabled many initiatives to assist rural women with access to education, decent work and opportunities for starting businesses, and approximately 550 rural women had already benefited from them as owners of micro-businesses. Her Government had also adopted a national strategy for the economic and social empowerment of rural women for the period 2017–2020, the implementation of which had garnered the support of the international community, United Nations agencies and funding partners alike.

104. **Ms. Boucher** (Canada) said that in 2017 her Government had, for the first time, presented a gender statement in the federal budget that focused on the impact of Government investments on different groups of women and men and highlighted budget measures to support greater gender equality. The recently introduced Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence had laid the foundation for coordination to improve the domestic response to gender-based violence. The Feminist International Assistance Policy, launched in June 2017, was guided by the notion that gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls was the most effective way to eliminate poverty and forge sustainable peace and development, and put women and girls at the heart of her country's international efforts. The world benefited when all women and girls were able to make decisions about their bodies, lives and futures, free from discrimination, coercion and violence. Therefore her Government supported the advancement of sexual and reproductive health and rights, going beyond the provision of health services to include the prevention of and response to sexual and gender-based violence such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

105. The challenges faced by women living in rural and remote areas, particularly the relatively large population of Indigenous women, included lower rates of employment and participation in the labour force and over-representation in low-income situations. As Canada was a "work in progress", her delegation looked forward to working with Member States to advance the rights of women, and her Government was committed to working with Indigenous leaders to improve the situation for Indigenous people.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.

United Nations A/C.3/72/SR.10

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Chair: Ms. Kazsas ..... (Hungary)

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17-17676 (E)

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In the absence of Mr. Gunnarsson (Iceland), Chair, Ms. Kaszas (Hungary), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 28: Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/72/38)

(a) Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/72/93, A/72/134, A/72/207 and A/72/215)

(b) Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (*continued*) (A/72/203 and A/72/220)

1. **Mr. Ali** (Pakistan) said that while progress had been made in improving the status of women globally, longstanding institutional gender inequalities in Pakistan required greater attention and sustained advocacy. Pakistan's Constitution guaranteed equal rights for all and the full participation of women in national life. Pioneering women had attained senior posts in Government and the armed forces, among them the first female Prime Minister in the Muslim world.

2. Gender equality and women's development were among the focuses of Pakistan's major initiatives, including its Vision 2025 blueprint for sustainable and inclusive development, the National Sustainable Development Strategy, the National Education Policy, the National Climate Change Policy and the National Disaster Management Plan.

3. Government measures to reduce the feminization of poverty included the promotion of women's participation in the workforce through non-traditional skill development and increased availability of financial resources, expansion of the social safety net to provide stipends to millions of women, and the enactment of legislation promoting the rights of women working from home and protecting women against harassment in the workplace, acid and burn assaults, rape, domestic violence and other crimes.

4. **Mr. Islam** (Bangladesh) said that Bangladesh had achieved remarkable success in advancement of women, in recognition of which the Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, had been declared Planet 50-50 Champion by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and granted the Agent of Change Award by the Global Partnership Forum in 2016. Women had been elected to office at all levels, and Bangladesh was possibly the only country where the Prime Minister, Leader of the Opposition, Speaker and Deputy Leader of the House were all women.

5. Bangladesh ranked first among South Asian countries in the 2016 Global Gender Gap Index of the World Economic Forum and was implementing a range of fruitful policies prioritizing gender equality and women's participation in the workforce, which had jumped from 7 per cent in 2000 to approximately 40 per cent currently. The Government was mainstreaming the development of rural and marginalized women by providing a social security net and easier access to credit while also building social awareness to address forced labour, early marriage, and violence against women and girls.

6. Bangladesh was managing a humanitarian crisis of over half a million undocumented Myanmar nationals, mostly women and children. The international community needed to address the vulnerability of women and girls in the face of conflict situations and other adversities including climate change.

7. **Ms. Bellout** (Algeria) said that Algeria had complied with key international human rights commitments encompassing the rights of women, and had adopted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Sustainable Development Goals. The Government had also implemented a range of strategies and legislative amendments enhancing women's participation in civil and political life, including a law requiring the inclusion of women in the leadership of political parties, four of which were currently headed by women.

8. A strategy established in 2007 and reinforced in 2015 had consolidated the efforts of stakeholders and civil society to combat violence against women. To safeguard women and their property and financial resources, the Criminal Code sanctioned all forms of violence including sexual and verbal abuse as well as psychological and economic violence. The Government attached great importance to the involvement of women in national development through measures encompassing the creation of microenterprises and income-generating activities, and had established two mechanisms to develop appropriate public policy.

9. **Mr. Kayinamura** (Rwanda) said that as a member of its Executive Board, Rwanda would continue to support the significant contributions of UN-Women to the advancement and empowerment of women. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action remained the most comprehensive global framework for the full realization of women's rights, but some countries were deficient in implementation of all twelve critical areas.

10. A legal and policy framework for women's economic empowerment had been implemented to grant easier access to land and finance, helping to drastically reduce the proportion of women in extreme poverty. Beyond the minimum 30 per cent quota established in the Rwandan constitution for women in all decision-making positions, women accounted for 64 per cent of parliamentary seats, over 38 per cent of the Senate, over 47 per cent of Government positions and approximately 40 per cent of the judiciary.

11. Strategies for gender mainstreaming in information and communication technologies had contributed significantly to women's empowerment through improved access to market information and increased business initiatives for women. Remaining challenges to the economic inclusion of women included limited skills and employability due to gendered roles. It was important to view investment in gender equality as a means of developing employment opportunities.

12. **Ms. Cyrille** (Madagascar) said that her Government had implemented a number of legislative, judicial, regulatory and political mechanisms for the advancement and development of women's rights and gender equality in socioeconomic and other domains. The revised non-discriminatory Nationality Code adopted in 2016 allowed children with a Malagasy mother and foreign father to acquire Malagasy citizenship.

13. Madagascar had reinforced its institutional mechanisms for addressing the problems facing women and girls by creating counselling and legal advice centres with private sector participation. Malagasy men conscious of gender inequalities were a valuable resource for raising awareness of gender-related issues among opinion leaders, traditional leaders and young men. Gender considerations were incorporated into all Government development projects, and women's community councils ensured their reflection in community development.

14. To promote the advancement of women, Madagascar had introduced measures including educational grants and supplies for students, vocational centres for women and girls nationwide, and campaigns raising awareness of reproductive health, family planning and early marriage. Between 2015 and 2017, 2,668 women with obstetric fistulas had been treated and 43 surgeons trained in the treatment, while 144,000 birthing kits had been distributed. In 2017 alone, 2,837 Caesarean sections had been performed. To address violence against women, Madagascar had launched a national strategy based on its five-year action plan for 2017–2021, and was currently drafting a law to combat gender-based violence.

15. **Ms. Mehdiyeva** (Azerbaijan) said that the disproportionately low representation of women in public life and decision-making processes, gender stereotyping, vulnerability of women in conflict situations and other factors were barriers to gender equality. The Government had improved the situation of women in Azerbaijan through various policies. Women's representation in the National Assembly had increased from 11 per cent in 2005 to 17 per cent in 2015, women accounted for 35 per cent of elected candidates after the 2014 municipal elections compared with 4 per cent in 2004, and the number of women in key Government positions had also increased significantly.

16. Programmes and legislation addressed specific needs of women and girls as well as gender equality in opportunities, access to education and treatment in the workplace. A national strategy developed with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) introduced effective solutions to a number of reproductive health issues. Initiatives supporting small and medium-sized businesses were aimed at enhancing the economic empowerment and community-based decision-making role of women in rural areas.

17. Azerbaijan had enacted legislation to combat domestic violence, and called on Member States to fund measures countering gender-based violence. It was also creating a database of assaults and establishing monitoring groups to analyse causes and protect victims of abuse.

18. **Mr. Yao** Shaojun (China) said that despite encouraging progress in the advancement of women, regional conflicts, climate change, and the refugee and migrant crisis disproportionately affected women and required action by the international community.

19. Strategies for women's advancement needed to include the gender perspective and safeguard women's rights to ensure gender equality in social development, and Member States should implement all objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development consistently. Increased financial and technical assistance of developing countries was necessary to eliminate regional imbalances in the advancement of women. Vulnerable groups including women with disabilities, elderly women and female victims of human trafficking required greater protection.

20. China had formulated over one hundred laws, rules and regulations to safeguard women's rights and protect

them from discrimination and violence. The Programme for the Development of Chinese Women (2011–2020) had already achieved most of its indicators for monitoring advances in women's entrepreneurship, participation in decision-making, health and access to education. Women accounted for over 42 per cent of total employment and around half of enrolments in tertiary education, while the maternal mortality rate had fallen to approximately 20 deaths per 100,000.

21. **Mr. Skinner-Klée** (Guatemala) said that women accounted for 50 per cent of the economically active population in his country. The Government was committed to the empowerment of women and children in all sectors by monitoring compliance with and updating employment legislation, implementing a national minimum wage and providing women with training, education and technical assistance to raise productivity levels, providing social protection of working women and guaranteeing women and migrants access to information, training and advice in defending their labour rights.

22. The Government had focused on the empowerment of women and girls to achieve equality in employment, eliminate gender-based discrimination and violence, and end early and forced marriage. Laws had been enacted outlawing femicide on religious or cultural grounds as well as sexual violence, exploitation and trafficking regardless of consent. At the first meeting of the Women, Peace and Security National Focal Points Network in April 2017, Guatemala had exchanged best practices and discussed practical challenges of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and had produced a national action plan for its implementation, its greatest achievement in protecting the rights of women in conflict and post-conflict situations.

23. **Mr. Douti** (Togo), highlighting the important contribution of women to development, said that Togo was advancing the rights of women and girls through measures to attain gender equality in access to education and training that had achieved parity in preschool and primary attendance and raised the primary school completion rate of girls from 54 per cent in 2007 to 83 per cent in 2016. Increases in literacy rates among women had been supported by a Government subsidy funding classes for an additional 1,200 women in rural areas each year. The Government had established 7,500 literacy centres and 250 village libraries nationally.

24. The empowerment of women was a powerful driver of economic growth and job creation for sustainable improvements in living conditions. Several economic programmes had benefitted over 700,000 people, mostly women, by providing assistance such as financial services for the poorest members of society. The volunteer programme for young Togolese had provided work for thousands of young women. Institutional and programme reforms were designed to ensure the consideration of women's rights in all development processes.

25. The number of National Assembly seats held by women had risen from 11 per cent to 15 per cent since 2007 and included some key senior positions. Satisfactory reductions in infant and maternal mortality had been achieved in part through the provision of reproductive health advice, insecticide-treated mosquito nets and obstetric fistula care.

26. **Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that significant legal, institutional and societal progress had been made in the advancement of women, who had become key development actors as the country strived to become an emerging economy. Special funds had provided over 110,000 women with access to finance, markets, information and technology, facilitating their socioeconomic empowerment.

27. Significant reforms expanded free education, established compulsory schooling for children aged 6 to 16 years and required separate school bathrooms for boys and girls, while also founding boarding schools in regions with high rates of early marriage and pregnancy among schoolgirls and introducing grants to provide girls with technical and vocational training. The military and police academies began accepting female candidates in 2013 and 2015, respectively. Gender equality in employment was guaranteed by article 4 of the Constitution.

28. Women made up half of the Constitutional Council and one-third of the Economic, Social, Environmental and Cultural Council, a testament to the political will to eliminate gender discrimination and barriers to the advancement of women, improving their living conditions and elevating their decision-making power in Ivorian society. The Government also sought to promote women's entrepreneurship and economic empowerment through training and finance initiatives. Gender-related issues must be addressed from the perspective of human rights to break down sociocultural stereotypes.

29. **Ms. Pongor** (Hungary) said that the Government supported international measures for gender equality and the empowerment of women, including the full implementation of Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security, the prevention and elimination of all forms of gender-based violence, the participation of women in peace processes and the prevention of conflicts.

30. Committed to eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls, Hungary had allocated 9.6 million euros to extend victim services with psychological and legal support, protected victim accommodation and awareness-raising measures. The Hungarian National Social Inclusion Strategy encompassed child welfare, education, employment, training, healthcare and housing. A presidential commission on research careers for women established in 2017 and specialized national talent development programmes promoted gender parity in science, technology, engineering, mathematics and other fields.

31. Full and productive employment was a top priority, with a focus on women and disadvantaged groups. A programme to reduce the school dropout rate of Roma girls aged 10-18 had been launched in 2015. The Government sought to balance work and family commitments with stable, targeted and flexible social policies enabling women to decide how and when they returned to employment after childbirth. Maternity support and three years of paid childcare leave were universal. Women had the right to work part-time until their child reached the age of three, and companies employing women with young children were eligible for a subsidy.

32. **Mr. Joshi** (India) said that rapid urbanization and new, disruptive technologies presented both opportunities and challenges for women's empowerment. Gender equality had been enshrined in the Constitution of India almost seventy years ago, and the political, social and economic empowerment of women had been a major policy objective of his Government. Over 1.3 million elected women representatives were helping to formulate and implement gender-sensitive policies throughout India. Women had excelled in all domains and held several senior governmental positions. An all-female team of Indian naval officers was currently navigating the globe, serving as role models for millions of women and girls.

33. Programmes for poverty eradication and financial inclusion had a special focus on women's empowerment. Gender mainstreaming and gender-sensitive budgeting had been institutionalized in public policy initiatives, and virtual gender parity had been achieved in education. Adequate sanitation infrastructure currently under construction would contribute to women's safety. Recently introduced measures to prevent gender-based violence included helplines, panic buttons on mobile phone handsets, crisis centres, adequate street lighting and closed-circuit surveillance systems. Indian states had been advised to implement a 33 per cent quota of women police officers, and some states had all-female police stations.

34. India had been a regular contributor to funding for UN-Women and had conducted regular training courses for women peacekeepers in collaboration with UN-Women. As part of South-South cooperation, India partnered with fellow developing countries in capacity-building programmes that included training semi-literate rural middle-aged women as engineers to achieve rural electrification using solar power.

35. **Mr. El Hacen** (Mauritania) said that gender equality was enshrined in his country's Constitution, which guaranteed women all civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights pursuant to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. The Government had adopted all international instruments regarding the rights of women and girls and had criminalized all forms of gender-based violence.

36. Mauritania had adopted a qualitative approach to improving the situation of women in all national programmes and had implemented a strategy to empower women and remove socioeconomic obstacles to their development. Positive discrimination promoted the status of women, who played a key role in all areas of life including the executive, legislative and judicial branches. The retirement age for both women and men was sixty. Barriers to women's entry into domains such as the police and armed forces had been removed.

37. The Government had sought to facilitate women's access to the labour market with easy credit for small and medium-sized enterprises, benefitting rural women and women with disabilities in particular and giving rise to trade networks for and spearheaded by women. Mauritania prioritized the health of women and girls and was combating harmful practices.

38. **Ms. Halvorsen** (Denmark), speaking as a youth delegate, said that when discussing gender equality and the advancement of women, access to education for young women and the importance of sexual and reproductive health and rights, including the right to legal and safe abortion, were key related issues that required comprehensive and progressive approaches from a human rights perspective. Women and girls had the right to freely choose their romantic and marital partners and decide on their sexual and reproductive health and rights. Denmark was a founding member of the She Decides movement for the protection and advancement of the rights of all women and girls.

39. The advancement of women and gender equality went hand in hand with the empowerment and inclusion of the young generation that represented the future. Gender equality was an issue for both young women and men, who should experience equal rights, opportunity

and respect regardless of their gender. The advancement of women was a universal concern to be addressed around the world so that every girl and woman could decide what she wanted to do with her body, her life and her future, with no gender-based limitations of opportunity.

40. **Mr. Ri** Song Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that women in his country participated actively in state and social activities and contributed significantly to social development. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea strove to promote and protect human rights, particularly women's rights. The Government had submitted the second to fourth combined report on implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women to the treaty body in April 2016, would take part in the sixty-eighth session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in November 2017, and would actively strive for the implementation of gender equality, advocacy of women's rights, the advancement and well-being of women, and strengthened international cooperation.

41. His delegation wished to highlight a heinous crime against women committed by Japan, which had forced more than 200,000 Korean women and girls into sexual slavery during the Second World War and had insulted the victims by referring to them as prostitutes. Despite requests from the international community, Japan had denied its crime to date and must admit its state and legal responsibility. The United Nations should insist that Japan made a sincere official apology and provide compensation.

42. His delegation noted that two years had passed since the Republic of Korea had abducted twelve women from his country, refusing to provide information on their fate or allow them to be repatriated. The Government and the victims' parents had repeatedly asked the Secretary-General, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Human Rights Council to place the crime on the agenda of the Organization and hold the criminals accountable in the international court but had yet to receive a positive response. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea had also proposed a visit to North and South Korea by the High Commissioner for Human Rights to resolve the abduction. South Korean authorities should apologize immediately and return the abducted women.

43. **Ms. Horbachova** (Ukraine) said that Ukraine had improved its national legislation and policies on gender equality by adopting national action plans to implement the human rights strategy up to 2020 and Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security. Recommendations from the consideration of the eighth periodic report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had been incorporated into a new state social programme for equal rights and opportunities for women and men up to 2021.

44. The Government of Ukraine was promoting gender equality in all of its policies and activities. In 2017, the Vice Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration, was assigned responsibility for the gender equality policy to advance and prioritize gender equality and women's rights. At the first official visit to Ukraine in June 2017, the Executive Director of UN-Women had launched two gender-related initiatives.

45. Ukraine reiterated its commitment to ensuring integration of the provisions of the women, peace and security agenda into its domestic policies and laws. The Equal Opportunities Inter-Factional Union (Caucus) was actively developing legislative initiatives to defend gender equality in parliament. Ukrainian women were becoming critical agents of change in the face of Russian aggression, as demonstrated by the mediation efforts of the First Deputy Chair of the Ukrainian Parliament.

46. **Ms. Nguele Makouelet** (Congo) said that her Government was focused on achieving the empowerment of women and girls, the elimination of all forms of gender-based violence and the advancement of gender equality.

47. Progress required the full equal participation of women at all decision-making levels, and significant advances had been made in women's participation in public life. Following the 2016 electoral law stipulating a 30 per cent minimum quota for female candidates and strict rotation of top-level positions in the municipalities, the number of women elected to the senate, the national assembly and county councils had risen, with gender parity achieved in some counties.

48. Government efforts to eliminate all forms of gender discrimination were detailed in its seventh report, which was pending review by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Government ministries, specialized associations and legal clinics organized annual awareness-raising campaigns on the rights of women, drafted in local languages to reach all levels of the community. Young women continued to study for legal careers at the National School of Administration and Magistracy, and certain university courses promoted gender equality.

49. **Ms. Sandoval** (Nicaragua) said that women had a central role in Nicaragua as a result of significant

changes in society, participating in decision-making at all levels and benefiting increasingly from laws and public policy that gave them more rights. Some 32 per cent of judges were female, including 65 per cent of local and district court judges, and the number of appeals court judges had risen by 47 per cent. Women held 52 per cent of administrative posts, many at the management level.

50. The "faith, family and community" model had been raising the living standards of women and their families, with improved health care reducing maternal mortality among women in rural areas. Launched in April 2017, the Productive Food Programme aimed to empower 90 per cent of women with control over their own development and wellbeing. The political progress of Nicaraguan women was demonstrated in the Women in Politics Map published by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and UN-Women in March 2017, which provided a world ranking of women's participation in governments and parliaments.

51. **Mr. Al-Abdali** (Oman) said that women and men had equal rights in his country and the freedom to choose where to live and work. Oman played a leadership role in the advancement of women, who constituted the majority in education programmes and labour markets. Oman celebrated a national day of women on 7 October every year to highlight their role in society.

52. Women had positions in public administration, including ministerial, ambassadorial and senatorial posts, as well as in the judiciary and security forces. They also had the right to vote and hold elected office, and benefited equally from housing assistance. The Government had passed laws protecting women from all forms of discrimination and granting paid maternity leave of fifty days per year. Oman would spare no effort in integrating the advancement of women into all programmes and projects in the hope that society would benefit.

53. **Mr. Diarra** (Mali) said that his Government had adopted various measures to improve the legal, economic and social status of women. The National Gender Policy granted women access to all levels of public administration, including the security forces, for increased participation in decision-making processes. As a result of a law passed in December 2015 establishing minimum 30 per cent quotas for appointed and elective posts to be held by women, over 30 per cent of municipal councillors were female following local elections in November 2016.

54. In addition to continued efforts to eradicate discriminatory sociocultural practices, Mali had established a fund for the empowerment of women and had introduced a business development programme to raise the incomes of women working in the shea butter sector. A flagship programme launched in March 2017 aimed to increase women's visibility, participation and leadership in business management.

55. A significant increase in the participation of girls in schooling at all levels since 2000 and an ongoing informal literacy and education strategy were essential to the economic empowerment of women. The Government had also instituted mandatory health insurance and medical assistance schemes to give women more control over their health care, and planned to introduce universal health care by 2018 to eliminate health service inequalities for women in rural areas and in the informal employment sector.

56. **Ms. Fofana** (Burkina Faso) said that the advancement of women, who constituted more than half the population of many countries, was essential to ensure harmonious and inclusive development. Burkina Faso had made excellent progress on women's empowerment with initiatives including a programme to combat gender-based violence, a 30 per cent quota for female candidates in legislative and municipal elections, a law facilitating women's ownership of rural property, and national strategies to eliminate gender disparity in education and support women's entrepreneurship.

57. It was nevertheless important to focus on the many remaining obstacles to the empowerment of women if sustainable development was to be achieved. The Government had centred its new national development framework on gender, including a plan to increase the proportion of women in appointed and elected posts, the operationalization of treatment for victims of gender-based violence and the reinforcement of socio-educational services to reduce school dropout rates and facilitate the reintegration of girls with incomplete or no schooling. A strategy for the advancement and protection of young girls had been adopted, and the State had prioritized women for the allocation of newly developed land with a view to increasing the rate of female ownership to 30 per cent by 2019.

58. **Ms. Mukhtar** (Sudan) said that the Sudan had developed strategies to promote the role of women in society, and part of the 2012 national development plan focused specifically on women. In 2007, it had established a national policy for the advancement of women, addressing crucial areas such as health, environment, education, economic development, participation in decision-making processes, conflict resolution, peacebuilding and the protection of rights. A

national strategy to combat discrimination against women had been developed in 2008. The Government had spearheaded a project to promote the role of women, focusing on rural women and Darfur, and had introduced training programmes for rural women. It had also launched campaigns to raise awareness of health and food issues pertaining to women.

59. The Constitution guaranteed gender equality in public life, and women enjoyed equal pay for equal work as well as all due economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights. The Sudan had established a strategy to eradicate gender-based violence in 2005, and had subsequently created a unit to combat violence against women and girls and a police unit for the protection of families and children. In 2014, a law was adopted to combat the trafficking of women and children. The Government had also created a unit within the North Sudan Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission to support women specifically. An independent human rights commission was chaired by a woman.

60. Climate change, migration, financial crises and poverty, conflicts and certain aspects of tradition had a negative impact on the advancement of women. The Sudan called upon the international community to address those issues comprehensively by cancelling the debt of developing countries so that they could benefit from subsidies and initiatives for least developed countries with technical and material improvements that would ultimately benefit women. Her delegation hailed the decision taken earlier that day to lift economic sanctions on the Sudan.

61. **Ms. Sorto** (El Salvador) said that her country had made significant advances in protecting the rights of women with the enactment of laws in 2011 and 2012 on the promotion of gender equality, the elimination of gender-based discrimination and violence, and the protection of women's rights. There had been a 22 per cent rise in the number of gender policies, as well as double-digit increases in the numbers of institutions with gender units, equality plans and specific equality budgets. Many institutions had also implemented staff training and campaigns addressing gender rights, equality, discrimination and violence against women. The Government had also raised awareness of women's rights and gender-based violence among the population.

62. In July 2017, El Salvador had launched a national action plan on Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security, and was coordinator of the CELAC working group on the advancement of women through equality and empowerment. The Government was committed to addressing the needs of specific groups such as elderly, indigenous or migrant women and women with disabilities. It had also developed strategies supporting the right of adolescent girls to comprehensive, appropriate and quality health care with an emphasis on sexual and reproductive health. Greater coordination on gender-based discrimination was needed at the national, regional and international levels.

63. **Mr. Gebru** (Ethiopia) said that his Government had been working diligently to improve the lives of women by combating harmful traditional practices and improving their economic empowerment and political participation. Ethiopia's commitments to women's rights were guided by its Constitution together with national and international laws, policies and instruments. Gender issues had been mainstreamed in primary governmental activities.

64. Traditional practices harmful to women had been reduced through criminalization and awareness-raising measures. A comprehensive strategy was in place to prevent violence against women and girls while bringing perpetrators to justice. Women's representation had increased in judicial, federal, regional and local bodies, and their economic empowerment was supported through microfinance schemes, equal landholding rights, affirmative action policies resulting in 50 per cent female ownership of urban condominiums and reserving half of the job opportunities arising from urban development for women.

65. An ongoing health extension programme had succeeded in deploying over 41,000 health extension workers, almost all female, and initiatives promoting the right of women to reproductive health, family planning services, increased pre- and post-natal health care, and expanded delivery by experts had helped decrease maternal and child mortality.

66. **Mr. Kafle** (Nepal) said that Nepal was committed to eliminating gender-based discrimination and violence using a rights-based approach to the social, economic and political empowerment of women and girls, particularly those living in rural areas, and ensuring their rights to health, education, employment, property and participation in public life.

67. Recent local elections had filled almost half of all posts with female representatives, and the Constitution reserved 33 per cent of seats in federal and provincial parliaments for women while also stipulating that holders of the positions of President and Vice-President must be of different genders or from different communities, and that either the Speaker or Deputy Speaker of the lower house and Chair or Vice-Chair of the upper house must be female.

68. Nepal had been submitting periodic reports to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, had recently extended an invitation to the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, and was the first country in its region to develop a national action plan on Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008). Progress on literacy, maternal health, and women's political participation and working conditions advanced gender equality and empowerment and raised hope of achieving the goal of the Planet 50-50 by 2030: Step It Up for Gender Equality campaign by 2030.

69. **Mr. Panayotov** (Bulgaria) said that as President of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Bulgaria strongly advocated the full realization of the human rights of women and girls with disabilities and their active participation in society on an equal basis with others. The Government had made substantial progress on women's empowerment and participation in decision-making at all levels. Gender equality and non-discrimination were basic principles enshrined in the Constitution and had been successfully mainstreamed in national legislation, policies and programmes.

70. Bulgaria had adopted a new law on equality between women and men in 2016, having previously signed the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence in 2015. His country had already observed positive results for the economy from the increased participation of women in the labour market resulting from legislative and policy measures that ensured equality of treatment, economic independence and pay, and helped to overcome gender-based stereotypes. Civil society in Bulgaria also played a crucial role in promoting gender equality by actively participating in the elaboration of suitable legislation and policies.

71. **Mr. Dzonzi** (Malawi) said that in addition to acceding to various regional and international instruments, Malawi had adopted legislative, policy, judicial and institutional measures aimed at promoting and protecting the rights of women. Women's rights initiatives helped to increase gender equality, access to wealth creation, overall quality of life for women, and representation in governance and public service. In 2017, the Government had disseminated gender-related laws to traditional authorities for harmonization with their respective by-laws, rolled out a gender-based violence module for the Integrated Information Management System, implemented a nationwide strategy to strengthen men's engagement and initiatives in gender equality and women's empowerment, and trained 389 groups of women in various business skills.

72. **Ms. Alfuhaid** (Kuwait) said that her Government firmly believed that successful achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals required the promotion of gender equality and the skills of women. Kuwait encouraged women to participate in all sectors of society, with women participating in decision-making, holding key Government positions and accounting for 79 per cent of administrative staff. Over 65,000 employees at the Ministry of Education were women compared to 11,000 men.

73. Her country would continue to promote the further empowerment of women and ensure their active participation in society. It had also sought to revitalize the role of women in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme by implementing several projects promoting the empowerment of women. The Government had reviewed all legislation to eliminate gender discrimination, and was working to enhance the technical skills and independence of women through training initiatives to strengthen women's participation in public life, provide services for working women and support their role in small and medium-sized businesses.

74. **Mr. Hendricks** (South Africa) said that women in his country were disproportionately affected by poverty; policies aimed at their economic empowerment were thus essential, as were measures addressing norms and stereotypes that hindered gender equality. Laws based on the principle of equal pay for equal work were critical for eliminating the gender pay gap. Priority should be given to women in rural areas facing multiple forms of discrimination.

75. Poverty, unemployment and lack of income had made some women dependent on male abusers. South Africa had compiled a range of legislative measures to address all forms of violence against women including domestic violence, contact crimes, sexual offences, economic and sexual exploitation, and trafficking. By providing sexual and reproductive health care such as anti-retroviral medication for sex workers and victims of sexual violence and rape, the Government sought to restore the dignity of marginalized women.

76. **Mr. Grigoryan** (Armenia) said that the international community must accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a prerequisite to achieving gender equality. In recent years, Armenia had initiated a number of legislative reforms and elaborated national action plans for the advancement of women. Amendments to the electoral code promoted the participation of women

in decision-making processes, while laws assisting victims of human trafficking and exploitation and establishing equal rights and opportunities were important instruments for promoting gender equality and human rights.

77. A draft law on the prevention of domestic violence and protection of victims had been submitted to the President for consideration in August 2017. Armenia had always advocated for the protection of the rights of women living in conflict zones, to which international human rights instruments, including special United Nations procedures and agencies, should have unimpeded access. Armenia believed that the involvement of women in peace processes might become an efficient confidence-building measure and an important reinforcement for reconciliation efforts. Women peace activists should be viewed and promoted as agents of peaceful change and peacebuilding in their societies.

78. **Mr. da Costa e Silva** (Timor-Leste) said that Timor-Leste had made good progress on the empowerment of women and the promotion of gender equality. Since the restoration of its independence 15 years ago, the country had incorporated the protection of women's rights into its policies and laws, and gender equality was enshrined in the Constitution. The Government had also adopted a gender mainstreaming policy and gender budgeting under the oversight of the Secretary of State for Gender Equality and Social Inclusion. Timor-Leste had also adopted laws to promote women's involvement in politics, with a 33 per cent quota for women in political party lists and reserved numbers of seats for women at local government level. As a result, 38 per cent of seats in the national parliament were held by women, the highest level in the Asia-Pacific region, and women had been elected to traditionally male positions such as village chief. Women were also well represented in the executive and judicial branches and in the diplomatic corps.

79. Timor-Leste had enacted a law codifying domestic violence as a public crime, and its penal code contained provisions on sexual exploitation and abuse, sexual harassment, violence against women, human trafficking and the organization and procurement of prostitution services. The 2017–2021 National Action Plan against Gender-Based Violence had been launched in 2017 with objectives including the reduction of cases of violence and the provision of victim support. The Government had taken steps to promote women's economic development with measures supporting female entrepreneurship, access to credit, training, and capacity development to help women move from the informal to the formal sector.

80. **Ms. Alamin** (Libya) said that despite the current transitional circumstances facing Libya, the Government was committed to combating gender discrimination and defending the rights of women to enjoy education, health care, social welfare and pension rights, and to engage in economic activities. Her country was also committed to implementing all international instruments and commitments strengthening the rights of women and protecting women from all forms of discrimination.

81. Libya condemned all forms of violence against women including sexual exploitation, sexual abuse, physical abuse, domestic violence and violence in the workplace, which affected women of all social classes and in all societies. Her delegation also condemned human trafficking, especially of migrant women and women in conflict zones, which was a crime against humanity. Libyan women had gained visibility in prominent decision-making positions in parliament or as ministers in the Government of National Accord. They wanted the new constitution to promote gender equality and eliminate discrimination between men and women, ensuring their right to full participation on an equal basis. The Government of National Accord should issue decree 210 of 2016 on the establishment of a women's promotion and protection unit to implement the 2015 Political Agreement.

82. The training and education of women was critical to ensuring women's full rights and facilitating their contribution to national development. Rural women played a critical role in the economic development of local communities, especially in developing countries whose economies depended on agriculture. Rural women were also responsible for raising the standard of living of their families, but continued to suffer from marginalization and discrimination.

83. **Mr. Aliu** (Ghana) said that violence against women and girls, harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation, the continued exclusion of women from economic opportunities, legal impediments to land ownership and access to inheritance, and poor maternal health services endangered the gains made in the empowerment of women in Ghana.

84. The Government had implemented measures for the advancement and empowerment of women and girls, including the National Gender Policy to mainstream gender concerns in all governmental planning processes, the Domestic Violence Act criminalizing harmful cultural practices, the National Child and Family

Welfare Policy and the National Social Protection Policy.

85. Ghana had introduced microcredit for small and medium-sized enterprises to ensure that women, particularly in rural communities, could obtain loans to boost their economic activity, and had intensified efforts to provide training, start-up equipment and financial support for unemployed young women. The Government was working with other stakeholders to end child marriage and other harmful cultural practices to break the cycle of poverty and deprivation, and was continuing the obstetric fistula repair programme, helping women treated for fistula to start their own businesses after surgery.

86. The Free Senior High School Education Policy launched in September 2017 would give thousands of young people access free secondary school education. Between 1998 and 2014, access to skilled ante-natal care rose from 82 per cent to 97 per cent and deliveries in health facilities from 42 per cent to 73 per cent, while 81 per cent of mothers received a post-natal check-up within the first two days after delivery, helping reduce maternal mortality from 467 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2000 to 319 in 2015.

87. **Ms. Haidour** (Morocco) said that women still faced obstacles to their advancement, such as inequalities in rates of school enrolment, literacy and scientific knowledge acquisition, and rising maternal and infant mortality. Their physical and psychological wellbeing was deteriorating as a result of gender-based violence, and diseases including HIV-AIDS orphaned more and more children, with negative consequences for societies. Moroccan women had seen significant progress and reached senior Government positions throughout the country including ambassador, prefect and director.

88. King Mohammed VI had created a foundation that addressed the needs of the poor and people with disabilities and focused on improving the situation of women and girls of school age, particularly in rural areas. Following the reform of the Moroccan family code in February 2004, measures had been introduced to promote women's access to top administrative and public posts and women had been appointed to the council of religious leaders. Adopted in 2011, the Constitution established the principle of gender equality in the civil, political, economic, social, cultural and environmental arenas.

89. The Government had adopted a law to combat all forms of discrimination and approved an equality plan, and was currently debating a law on violence against women. Multipurpose women's centres were being updated and standardized around the country. Morocco had ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1993, acceded to its optional protocol in 2008 and lifted all reservations in 2011. The country applied a zero-tolerance policy to violence against women.

90. **Ms. Christensen** (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)) said that greater action was needed to live up to joint commitments and reach all women and girls, especially the most vulnerable. Sixty per cent of the world's unimmunized children were living in fragile settings where more than half of all maternal, newborn and child deaths occurred, and women and girls with disabilities faced additional risks and barriers to assistance. Access to quality health services and other basic needs was essential. The solution would require significant investment in the institutional capacity of local actors, empowerment of health workers and first responders with access to necessary support, and gender and diversity training to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence.

91. Women and girls made up half of refugees worldwide and faced specific risks during migration. In Greece, the IFRC had set up a cash transfer programme that encompassed gender-related needs and had demonstrated how cash could reduce the prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence. A programme in Niger offered economic opportunities to women who migrated for economic reasons but often fell prey to sexual exploitation and abuse. Targeting vulnerable heads of household who might leave for lack of economic alternatives, the project helped extremely vulnerable women and children.

92. **Mr. Cassidy** (International Labour Organization (ILO)) said that inequality between women and men persisted in global labour markets, in respect of opportunity, treatment and outcomes. Advancements in women's educational achievements had not translated into comparable improvement in their employment prospects. In many parts of the world, women had fewer job opportunities and were more likely to remain unemployed or accept lower quality jobs. Progress on those obstacles had been slow and limited to a few regions. The unequal distribution of unpaid care and housework between genders and between families and society was an important determinant of gender inequalities at work.

93. As part of its upcoming centenary, ILO had launched the Women at Work Initiative to document the status and conditions of working women, identifying innovative sources of impetus for its work and

collaboration with key stakeholders to promote full gender equality and non-discrimination. In June 2017, the organization published a major report showing that women had more limited access to the labour market and quality employment opportunities. Closing those gaps would yield significant economic benefits and improve individual welfare.

94. ILO had also teamed up with Gallup World Poll to undertake pioneering surveys in 140 countries identifying global perceptions and realities of both genders regarding women and work. The results revealed that most women and men preferred women to have paid jobs and indicated the need for family-supportive policies enabling women to remain and progress in paid employment and encouraging men to assume their share of the care workload.

95. **Ms. Elliott** (World Food Programme (WFP)), speaking also on behalf of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), said that women in rural areas performed multiple roles, including domestic and agricultural chores and care of the young, sick and elderly, and were often invisible and undervalued. Their health, wellbeing and economic situation were also impaired by discrimination regarding property ownership and inheritance, training and education, and financial services and decision-making.

96. Environmental degradation and climate change often affected poor rural women disproportionately. Women with limited resources and income were more at risk of hunger, malnutrition and negative coping strategies. Where their access to productive resources, markets, climate information services, technology and training was enhanced, women's lives transformed and household food consumption tended to increase. The empowerment of rural women also led to greater influence in both household and community decision-making.

97. Support for women farmers in reducing post-harvest losses through food handling training and access to storage and transport technologies was designed to reduce the enormous levels of food waste. Innovative gender-responsive and climate-smart agricultural practices helped to build the climate resilience of women in rural areas and manage the risks associated with weather-related disasters.

Statements in exercise of the right of reply

98. **Mr. Saito** (Japan), responding to the statement made by Democratic People's Republic of Korea, said that the allegations and figures cited were based on factual error and totally groundless.

99. **Mr. Kang** Sangwook (Republic of Korea), responding to the statement made by Democratic People's Republic of Korea, said that over 30,000 North Korean workers had defected to the Republic of Korea of their own free will and had been admitted by the Government on humanitarian grounds. His delegation urged the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to improve the human rights situation of its people instead of pursuing nuclear development.

100. **Mr. Ri** Song Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that it was universally accepted that Japan had forced thousands of women to be sex slaves during the Second World War, which was an unpardonable crime against humanity. Japan should unconditionally and immediately admit its heinous crime. It was ridiculous to hear the South Korean delegation talk nonsense about the human rights situation in his country. The administration of the Republic of Korea had ordered the abduction of twelve women from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and had refused to provide information on the status of the victims. The group abduction was a grave violation of the human rights and dignity of the women, and another North Korean citizen had also been detained involuntarily in South Korea since 2011. The United Nations human rights mechanisms should hold the South Korean authorities accountable for their crimes.

101. **Mr. Saito** (Japan) said that the position of Japan on the issue was as previously stated, and he refrained from another detailed rebuttal. Since the end of the Second World War, Japan had become a democratic and peace-loving nation committed to the rule of law and the peace and prosperity of the Asia-Pacific region and the world.

102. **Mr. Kang** Sangwook (Republic of Korea) said that his delegation would not reiterate its previous response to the preposterous arguments. He urged North Korea to change its policies and improve the dire human rights circumstances of its people by cooperating with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and implementing relevant United Nations resolutions.

103. **Mr. Ri** Song Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that Japan was using its description of contributions to women, peace and security to cover up its brutal sex slavery crimes. If the Japanese administration did not apologize sincerely and give assurances never to commit such heinous crimes against women and humanity again, it would not be accepted as a peace-loving country by the international community.

Turning to the Republic of Korea, he said that the South Korean authorities had committed numerous human rights violations regularized those violations with fascist evil law, and conducted illegal inspections of civilians. Sexual assault, rape and murder by United States troops stationed in South Korea had also taken place. The Republic of Korea should immediately end its human rights campaign against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, focus on its own human rights situation and return the abducted North Korean citizens.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.

United Nations A/C.3/72/SR.11

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Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 9 October 2017, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Gunnarsson ..... (Iceland)
later: Ms. Kaszás ..... (Hungary)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Address by the President of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly

1. **Mr. Lajčák** (Slovakia), President of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly, said that the Third Committee had the potential to make a real difference, since so much of its work had a direct impact on people's lives. He encouraged delegations to reach beyond entrenched positions in their discussions of human rights and development and to seek to better understand one another and find solutions.

2. Promoting human rights was an overarching principle of the work of the United Nations. It was the foundation upon which collective efforts to advance human development and create peace were built. Human rights violations were often at the root of conflict, while upholding human rights contributed to conflict prevention and sustaining peace. Civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights were all equally important, and States had an obligation to uphold and protect all human rights for all people without discrimination. They also had a duty to address violations whenever and wherever they occurred; he hoped the Committee would not turn a blind eye to the difficult situations affecting people around the world.

3. Since human rights and development were mutually reinforcing, addressing both would make it possible to uphold human dignity and promote well-being. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was in its second year, and people faced serious social and humanitarian challenges in the quest for sustainable development. Those realities must be reflected in the discussions but real answers must be sought in the resolutions.

4. As a gender champion, he looked forward to the Committee's deliberations and outputs on the advancement of women. It was vital to continue to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as a key tool in the achievement of sustainable development. The Committee was the main body responsible for ensuring that States remained focused on the social dimensions of sustainable development so that they could work towards fulfilling the commitments made to their citizens in 2015.

5. Lastly, commending the Committee on the recent improvements in its working methods, he said that the changes would lighten the burden for all, especially States with smaller delegations. Deliberations in the Third Committee were not always easy, but they were essential, and he encouraged delegations to maintain a spirit of dialogue and consensus in their work.

Agenda item 68: Promotion and protection of the rights of children

(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children (A/72/164, A/72/218, A/72/275, A/72/276 and A/72/356)

(b) Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children (A/72/208)

6. **Ms. Gamba** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict), introducing her report (A/72/276), said that it focused on two major concerns, namely, the protection of education in situations of armed conflict, and the deeply worrying trend of increasing denial of humanitarian access to children by parties to conflict. Unfortunately, the developments identified in her report had continued unabated in 2017.

7. In Afghanistan, girls' education remained a direct target. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 174 attacks on schools had been verified between April and June 2017. The majority of those schools had been destroyed, looted or burned down by the Kamuina Nsapu militia in the Kasai region. It would take years, if not decades, before that region and its children recovered from losing those educational opportunities. The Committee must strive to promote the Safe Schools Declaration, since the price of a child losing access to education was too high. As the Sustainable Development Goals indicated, all children must have access to education, even in the most difficult circumstances. The Committee should do what it could to ensure that appropriate funding was available for education programmes in conflict-related emergency situations and to ensure that appropriate provisions on children affected by armed conflict were included in the global compact on refugees, in particular in relation to unaccompanied minors.

8. The denial of humanitarian access exemplified the vulnerability of children in conflict zones. In South Sudan, over 150 incidents had been verified by the United Nations for the period April to June 2017. Humanitarian access in Myanmar had also been very difficult throughout 2017. In Afghanistan, over 80,000 children had not received their polio vaccinations in the second quarter of 2017, owing to direct attacks and anti-vaccination bans imposed by armed groups, as well as general insecurity. The situation in the Syrian Arab Republic was perhaps the most worrying, particularly in relation to children's basic needs. Since the beginning of 2017, it had been possible to reach

only 38 per cent of people in besieged areas and 12 per cent of those in hard-to-reach areas. One hundred thousand lifesaving items had been denied or removed from convoys during the same period. Areas controlled by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) remained inaccessible, with the group blocking all deliveries of humanitarian aid. The Committee had an important role to play in emphasizing the norms of international law and in ensuring that the delivery of humanitarian aid to children was not politicized. It should therefore continue to include those elements in its resolutions and in other areas of its work.

9. Her report aimed to articulate her vision and outline how best to assess progress, raise awareness, promote the collection of information, work closely with relevant entities and foster international cooperation to ensure respect for children's rights and stop grave violations. A key component of her proposed approach was working with regional and subregional bodies and organizations, and the Committee should encourage and facilitate such cooperation. A subregional approach to strengthening the law to protect children could make a real difference. In addition, collaboration with all child protection actors was essential, while applying best practices and lessons learned required a tailored and context-specific approach.

10. Lastly, her Office and its partners must be provided with sufficient resources to enable them to focus on mandated tasks. In addition to fulfilling its heavy reporting requirements and engaging with parties to conflict, it would be very beneficial if her Office was able to expand its reach and devote more attention to areas such as awareness-raising and best practices. Such initiatives would aid the ultimate goal of preventing both conflict and grave violations affecting children in situations of conflict.

11. **Ms. Verstichel** (Belgium) said that her delegation deplored the attacks on schools and hospitals described in the report and was pleased to announce that Belgium had endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration.

12. She would like to hear more about the Special Representative's strategy for engaging regional and subregional organizations in the coming years. With regard to the reintegration of children, her delegation wished to recall the recommendations of the international conference on the rehabilitation and reintegration of war-affected children, held in Brussels in 2009. She asked how the Special Representative would consolidate commitments with armed groups that had expressed their intention to engage with the United Nations on action plans and what the child protection capacity of peacekeeping operations would be in view of diminishing peacekeeping budgets.

13. **Ms. Kirianoff Crimmins** (Switzerland) said that the mandate must be accorded sufficient financial and political support. Switzerland welcomed the Special Representative's vision, especially her call to increase the synergies between the United Nations, non-governmental organizations and civil society in order to better protect children and identify best practices.

14. Civilians must be given access to assistance and protection, and humanitarian actors must have access to civilians. Switzerland called on all parties to conflict to respect international humanitarian law and to facilitate the rapid and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian aid to civilians living in areas under their control. It also supported the Special Representative's call for parties to conflict to redouble their efforts to depoliticize the issue of humanitarian access. Denial of humanitarian access to children was one of the grave violations covered by the annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict and she would like to know whether the Special Representative thought it should be included as an additional trigger in the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism.

15. **Mr. García Moritán** (Argentina) asked what initiatives the Special Representative was planning with regard to cooperation and awareness-raising on the grave violations. He also wondered how Member States and the United Nations could support the implementation of the priorities of her mandate.

16. **Ms. Tasuja** (Estonia) said that the refusal of Governments to implement protective mechanisms that would improve conditions for their civilians was very disappointing and was particularly serious in relation to peacekeeping and humanitarian work. Regarding education, alternatives were needed when facilities had been destroyed. In every situation, political willingness was the key to progress. She wondered if the Special Representative could elaborate further on the relationship between humanitarian aid offered to Governments and the willingness of those Governments to deliver it.

17. **Mr. Matt** (Liechtenstein) said that Member States were encouraged in the report to take appropriate measures to reintegrate children who had lived through conflict, giving special attention to the needs of girls, and to provide the necessary political, technical and financial support to reintegration programmes. His delegation would appreciate more information on what such reintegration programmes

might look like and whether any States could offer their experiences as best practice.

18. **Mr. de la Mora Salcedo** (Mexico) said that Mexico had chaired the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict when Security Council resolution 1882 (2009) had been adopted, which had enabled the international community to address violations of children's rights such as murder, mutilation and abuse. Strengthening the Special Representative's mandate was a priority for his country, and it was one of the first examples of the Secretary-General's prevention agenda in action.

19. His delegation wondered what States could do to reintegrate children who had been recruited during armed conflict and how best practices might vary when it came to integrating children who had been born into armed conflict.

20. **Ms. Likina** (Russian Federation) asked what ideas had proved the most successful over the past 20 years since the establishment of the post of the Special Representative and what could be incorporated into future work. She asked for an outline of priority tasks and any changes that could be expected in the near future. Her delegation would also be interested to hear about the campaign that was currently being elaborated by the Office of the Special Representative as a continuation of the successful Children, Not Soldiers project.

21. **Ms. Bhengu** (South Africa) said that her delegation noted with regret that the majority of children affected by armed conflict were from the developing world. The contemporary manifestation of children in armed conflict seemed to be fuelled by the unregulated activities of private military and security companies, which would continue on that trajectory with impunity until the United Nations human rights system elaborated a legally binding instrument to hold them accountable.

22. **Mr. O'Brien** (Observer for the European Union) said that the list contained in the annex to the Secretary-General's annual report on children in armed conflict should continue to serve as an objective tool to identify perpetrators based on facts and evidence, with every party held to the same standard. Despite the success of the recently concluded Children, Not Soldiers campaign, the European Union remained concerned by the current international environment, which put children at risk of being affected by armed conflict. He asked for a more detailed explanation of the new campaign that would focus on all six grave violations against children, and how Member States could contribute to that initiative as well as to the action plan being developed by the Secretary-General to reinforce respect for international law and to the lessons-learned exercises to determine best practices.

23. **Mr. Dang** (France) said that, as the report highlighted repeatedly, the international community was facing enormous challenges. Besides the recruitment of children by armed groups, there were new threats, such as the indoctrination and use of children as human bombs by terrorist groups. France called on States that had not already done so to endorse the Paris commitments to protect children from unlawful recruitment or use by armed forces or armed groups and the Paris principles and guidelines on children associated with armed forces or armed groups.

24. With regard to the Special Representative's recommendation to compile best practices, his delegation wondered whether a formal system or mechanism could be established for sharing best practices.

25. **Mr. Overskott** (Norway), speaking as a youth delegate, asked how a lessons-learned exercise could be conducted that would be effective and relevant to field-based efforts to protect children. Norway appreciated the emphasis placed on access to education; the report underlined the strong link between investing in education in conflict and better protecting education from attack in order to be able to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

26. Protecting schools, including by deterring their military use, meant protecting children. Norway was encouraged by the Special Representative's longstanding support of the Safe Schools Declaration and was proud that it had already been endorsed by 69 States. His delegation wondered what more States could do collectively to encourage others to support it.

27. **Ms. Birštunaitė** (Lithuania) said that her delegation shared the Special Representative's concerns regarding the rising trend of denying humanitarian access to children in armed conflict and the increasing politicization of humanitarian aid provision. Denial of access was the only grave violation that did not trigger listing in the annexes of the annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict. She wondered whether expanding the scope of the triggers and including the parties responsible for denying humanitarian access in the annexes could serve as a deterrent.

28. **Ms. Shaheen** (United Arab Emirates) said that while her country did not question the goal of protecting children all over the world, the issue was of special importance in her region. The United Arab

Emirates welcomed the coordination that had been undertaken by the Office with member States and urged closer consultation with national Governments and reliable sources to avoid misinformation.

29. **Mr. Forman** (United Kingdom) said that his country welcomed the call to raise public awareness. Children continued to be targeted, coerced and exploited during conflict. The Government had identified children and armed conflict as a priority in its 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review and continued to provide financial support to the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. He asked the Special Representative to elaborate on any plans to raise awareness of her mandate.

30. **Mr. Koehler** (Germany) said that the Children and Armed Conflict mandate, with its fact-based monitoring and reporting mechanism, had played an indispensable role in protecting children in conflict. Germany appreciated the participation of the Office of the Special Representative in the annual workshop on children and armed conflict in Berlin in 2017. He asked which members of peacekeeping and special political missions took the lead on action plan negotiation and compliance work.

31. **Ms. Ortega Gutiérrez** (Spain) said that her delegation was particularly concerned by the difficulties of gaining humanitarian access to civilians. The provisions of international humanitarian law were not optional and they also played a preventive role.

32. Spain had made serious, firm and ongoing commitments to the protection of children in armed conflict. It had supported the "Children, not soldiers" campaign and had played an important role in drafting and adopting Security Council resolution 2286 (2016) on attacks against hospitals and doctors. In addition, it had participated in the Paris ministerial conference on protecting children in armed conflict and in the International Conference on Safe Schools, held in Buenos Aires.

33. **Ms. Abushawesh** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that, while her delegation appreciated the efforts of the Office of the Special Representative, the report did not go far enough in documenting the reality on the ground for children living under military occupation. While, understandably, it was not possible to include every violation perpetrated against Palestinian children, the report should at least recall recommendations that had not been heeded by Israel, such as the recommendation made in its 2015 report to take concrete and immediate steps to protect children, schools and hospitals, in particular by ensuring accountability for alleged violations, which had clearly been ignored by the occupying Power. In addition, the detrimental effects of the ten-year blockade of Gaza had not been mentioned.

34. **Mr. Mikayilli** (Azerbaijan) said that the Special Representative should pay attention to all situations of armed conflict that affected children and should gather information on the crimes committed against them, including the attack by the Armenian armed forces in July 2017, which had resulted in the death of a two-year-old girl.

35. His delegation also called on the Special Representative to give due attention to the protection of internally displaced children in her work, since they were just as vulnerable as refugees and sometimes more so.

36. **Mr. Morales López** (Colombia) expressed his delegation's appreciation for the Special Representative's support in successfully removing children from the ranks of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) and of his Government's efforts to reduce the numbers of illegal armed groups operating outside the law and perpetrating violations against children and adolescents. Significant progress had been made in preventing the recruitment of children in Colombia, since there had been a significant drop in the numbers recruited from January 2013 to April 2017. Nevertheless, challenges remained. Government institutions would continue to strengthen prevention strategies in order to put an end to those practices.

37. **Ms. Bellout** (Algeria) asked the Special Representative to elaborate further on her approach to using best practices and lessons learned to ensure that schools were protected from military use during armed conflict.

38. **Ms. Simpson** (United States of America) said that armed conflict was having a worse impact on children than 20 years earlier, which made the Special Representative's mission more important than ever. Children were increasingly subject to violence, exploitation and abuse, and the evidence was mounting that it was not incidental; rather, children were being directly targeted.

39. Given the gravity and long-term implications of that situation, the United States was committed to addressing the issue in the Security Council and through all its channels of influence. Her delegation wished to impress on Member States the critical importance of full compliance with all international

obligations and commitments on children and armed conflict.

40. **Mr. Qassem Agha** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his delegation hoped that the Special Representative would carry out her mandate with full transparency and objectivity and would not rely on the reports fabricated by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and other civil society organizations on humanitarian affairs in Syria. The Syrian Government was responsible for coordinating the entry of humanitarian aid into the country and had facilitated United Nations humanitarian access to areas that had been besieged by terrorist groups. To date, 7,000 requests for access to those areas had been approved in coordination with the United Nations and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

41. **Mr. Alkadi** (Saudi Arabia) said that Saudi Arabia was committed to cooperating with the United Nations to protect children's rights. It deeply regretted that children around the world were subjected to oppression and violence, targeted militarily, killed due to their religious affiliation, recruited into conflicts and used as human shields.

42. **Mr. Odisho** (Iraq) asked the Special Representative to share best practices for helping children subject to brainwashing in schools by armed extremist groups such as ISIL.

43. **Ms. Grigoryan** (Armenia) said that the children of Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia had been suffering as a result of attacks in border areas. Some of the victims of the Azerbaijani attack of April 2016 had been children. The only possible solution to the conflict was a peaceful resolution mediated by the Minsk Group, to which Azerbaijan should show commitment.

44. **Ms. Gamba** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict) said that she had tried to increase engagement between her office and Member States and had commenced discussions on the opening of regional chapters that would deal with issues related to children and armed conflict at various subregional bodies.

45. The only way to end violations against children in conflict was to put a stop to the conflicts themselves. Member States should ensure that all future peace agreements contained an article that explained how the parties to conflicts intended to demobilize children, as that would facilitate the process of reintegration, rehabilitation and retraining of children.

46. Child protection personnel on the ground, such as UNICEF staff and peacekeeping forces, constituted the front line in the effort to protect children, as they had access to armed actors and could explain what was expected of them. An increase in such personnel would improve delivery of services to children, but that required the generation of new resources. In the Central African Republic, for example, half of all demobilized children had been re-recruited into armed forces due to a lack of funding for reintegration projects.

47. Awareness-raising campaigns on the ground were also needed. A small programme on the recruitment and use of children in conflict that had been rolled out in only six countries had nevertheless had a significant impact, reaching members of armed groups and resulting in increased willingness among armed groups and Governments to engage in action plans with United Nations agencies. While many people had come to understand why recruitment and use were unacceptable, they did not always understand that attacks on schools and hospitals were equally unacceptable, and awareness-raising programmes that disseminated information on all six grave violations could address such attitudes.

48. Two main issues of concern were the detention of children and cross-border operations. As cross-border movements by armed groups and child recruits had increased, a subregional approach was needed to foster a common understanding of the problem among neighbouring countries. In addition, common protocols should be developed on how to deal with demobilized children and children with disabilities.

49. The Special Representative wished to act as a "force multiplier" that brought together like-minded persons and proactively collaborated with civil society organizations, Member States and research institutes with on-the-ground experience. Her task was to find ways for those actors to collaborate. It was important for Member States to provide financial and political support to those Member States that faced serious resource constraints. Reintegration and legal reform were two areas that deserved special attention in that regard.

50. Member States should host regionally focused workshops so that information on the dynamic phenomenon of children and armed conflict could be collected for analysis. It was important to highlight the role of advisors in operationalizing action plans, strengthen the overall child protection architecture in the countries of concern and ensure that there was adequate child protection capacity on the ground.

51. Turning to questions about humanitarian assistance and access, she said that denial of humanitarian access was discussed in her report, and that she would continue her advocacy on that issue. However, it was the up to the Security Council to decide what to do with the information that was collected. She looked forward to working with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to find ways to facilitate humanitarian access and mitigate violations against children. With respect to the question of how to deal with children who had never been integrated into their societies, it would be necessary to begin such community-building from scratch.

52. **Mr. Forsyth** (Deputy Executive Director, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)), introducing the reports of the Secretary-General on the status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (A/72/356), the girl child (A/72/218) and the follow-up to the outcome of the special session of the General Assembly on children (A/72/208), said that progress had been made on children's issues. There had been dramatic reductions in child mortality and in stunting due to malnutrition, and the number of children in primary school had increased. Although that progress should be celebrated, two significant challenges remained. First, violence and conflict was a serious problem. One out of every four children in the world was affected by conflict or natural disasters. For example, over 60 per cent of Rohingya refugees fleeing Myanmar to Bangladesh were children, who were not only vulnerable to violence but also to waterborne diseases. Second, inequality and inequity were problems. Millions of children were being left behind due to gender, disability and poverty.

53. During a visit to Borno State in Nigeria, representatives from UNICEF had spoken to girls who had been kidnaped by Boko Haram. They had told stories of captivity, beatings, rape and disease, but they wanted those stories to be heard. Moreover, they wanted the chance to go to school. There needed to be more investment in education, particularly girls' education, in conflict-affected countries. In Borno State, for example, over half of all schools had been destroyed and thousands of teachers had been killed or displaced. Such investment would help children overcome trauma and give them hope. In the words of Muzoon Almellehan, the youngest-ever UNICEF goodwill ambassador and a former refugee currently living in Europe, conflict could strip away a person's home, family and pride, but it could never take away a person's knowledge.

54. **Ms. Santos Pais** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children), introducing her annual report, (A/72/275), said that a child died every five minutes as a result of violence, and one billion children around the world experienced emotional, physical or sexual violence every year. Such abuse was often hidden because the victims were too afraid to speak out, as in the case of children accused of witchcraft. Those children were often persons with disabilities or with albinism, or perceived as "different", and were frequently abandoned by their families and forced to live in the streets. They faced stigma and were often murdered in violent rituals. There was a reluctance to speak openly about that problem and the sense of impunity with respect to that abuse was widespread.

55. Children made up more than half of the refugee population. Any future negotiations related to the global compacts on refugees and migration must take children's experiences into account. To that end, she would issue a report in collaboration with UNICEF that was based on a survey of over 170,000 children. The survey had found that violence was the major reason children left their countries and that violence and exploitation continued to be enormous challenges during the journey and upon arrival at the destination.

56. Civil society organizations were important partners in combatting violence against children In June 2017, the leading international child-focused agencies had agreed to join forces to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and create platforms that would enable children to express their concerns and provide input on policy decisions.

57. **Mr. Monteiro** (Brazil) said that his country believed that protecting children from violence was essential for the achievement of just societies, and was pleased to see that Member States had made tangible progress in mainstreaming policies for protecting children from violence. He asked the Special Representative to outline the main issues related to the protection of children from violence that were not adequately covered by national legislation, and to discuss the normative gaps that needed to be addressed in that regard.

58. **Ms. Bellout** (Algeria) said that her Government had made several amendments to its constitution in a step towards eliminating violence against children. Algeria commended the collaboration by the Special Representative with regional organizations, including the African Union, and her support of African efforts to end child marriage.

59. *Ms. Kaszás (Hungary), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

60. **Mr. O'Brien** (Observer for the European Union) said that the European Union looked forward to cooperating with the Office to eliminate violence against children by 2030. It also wished to underline the importance of the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children and the Solutions Summit that would be held in 2018.

61. The report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children discussed the importance of cooperation with the private sector, and he asked for best-practice examples of such initiatives. His delegation also wished to hear more about the High Time to End Violence against Children initiative and how it contributed to the implementation of the relevant Sustainable Development Goals. Finally, he asked about the results of initiatives to end bullying, including cyberbullying.

62. **Ms. Cid Carreño** (Chile) said that her country was grateful for the Special Representative's support in establishing a comprehensive system to safeguard children's and adolescents' rights, especially with regard to criminalizing and eradicating new forms of violence. She would like to know how the Special Representative envisaged working more closely with national parliaments or transmitting to them the concern regarding the elimination of all forms of violence.

63. **Mr. Morales López** (Colombia) said that the 2030 Agenda was an opportunity to ensure that all children grew up free from violence, abuse and exploitation, in particular through the achievement of target 16.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

64. Violence compromised all rights of the child, and Colombia had implemented numerous action plans to ensure the issue was given sufficient priority, including a programme to promote comprehensive protection and action on issues such as child labour, the consumption of psychoactive substances and illegal recruitment. Colombia would continue to work towards the implementation of national household surveys on children's exposure to violence. By compiling real data, it would be possible to uncover the truth regarding the problem of violence in children's lives and prepare national action plans to address it.

65. **Mr. de la Mora Salcedo** (Mexico) said that the Special Representative's mandate had evolved over time and was at the forefront of identifying best practices and new issues as well as producing statistics and hard data. His country was committed to the protection of children and the eradication of all forms of violence affecting them. For that reason, Mexico was participating in the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children as a pathfinder country and had launched a national action plan to prevent and respond to violence against children and adolescents.

66. His delegation would like to know whether the detention of migrants who were minors constituted a form of violence against childhood, and how synergies could be improved between fulfilment of the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

67. **Ms. Omiya** (Japan) said that her country welcomed the seventh cross-regional meeting for advancing the protection of children from violence that had been held in Manila in June 2017 and supported the conclusions and recommendations from that meeting. Japan was determined to end child poverty and violence against children and enhance youth employment. It would be helpful if the Special Representative could share her views on how to promote Goal 16.2, and what measures were needed at the domestic, regional and international levels.

68. **Mr. Heinzer** (Switzerland) said that Switzerland reaffirmed its support for a global study on children deprived of liberty, to which it had already committed itself financially. Welcoming the focus placed on the elimination of violence against children in the context of new technological developments and related problems, in particular cyberbullying, Switzerland encouraged the Special Representative to continue to take into account the views of children. He asked what new risks arising from the use of new technology by children and increasing urbanization would have to be addressed before 2030.

69. **Ms. Birštunaitė** (Lithuania) said that, in 2017, the Parliament of Lithuania had adopted amendments to the law on the protection of children's rights to ban all types of violence against children, including corporal punishment. Her country was particularly concerned by the widespread practice of bullying and welcomed the attention given to the issue, including through the launching of the *Global Status Report on School Violence and Bullying* and the establishment of a multi-stakeholder platform for data and research. She asked where the focus should be in the fight against bullying and what further measures could be taken to prevent that scourge.

70. **Ms. Dravec** (Slovenia) said that, as part of its efforts to combat violence against children, Slovenia had adopted the Family Code in 2017 and was preparing a new resolution on family policy. The

Human Rights Ombudsman Act had been amended to make the long-standing "Advocate — a child's voice" project a part of the Ombudsman's permanent activities. Following the example of other European countries, Slovenia had established a house for children to enhance child protection in practice and prevent the revictimization of child victims of crime. She asked for examples of good practices in strengthening social protection to address poverty in order to mitigate the risk of violence against children.

71. **Mr. Ariturk** (United States of America) said that the United States encouraged Member States to collaborate with the Special Representative in her efforts to collect additional data and conduct research on violence against children. While all Governments should do their part to reduce the alarming number of children affected by violence, individuals who were aware of abuses committed against children were also responsible and must be educated to speak up. He asked the Special Representative to share best practices and effective interventions employed by countries to combat bullying, including cyberbullying.

72. **Ms. Likina** (Russian Federation) asked the Special Representative how her work had changed in practical terms since the inclusion in the 2030 Agenda of a target to end all forms of violence against children, and whether any progress had been made in the development of monitoring methodologies and the collection of disaggregated data on violence against children.

73. The Russian Federation was pleased that the ministerial declaration adopted at the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2017 had focused on the protection of the rights of the child, including their right to freedom from violence. Investing in children was important for the achievement not only of already existing goals but also of future ones.

74. **Ms. Tasuja** (Estonia) said that collaboration with faith-based organizations was a good way to empower communities at the national and regional levels to improve their lives, which, combined with external aid, created solid conditions for progress. She asked for examples of how faith-based organizations had made such an impact and whether there were similar cases in which communities had empowered themselves to improve the conditions of children's human rights.

75. **Mr. Hassan** (Maldives) said that the Maldives had recently launched a mobile reporting application and a 24-hour call centre through which incidents of violence could be reported anonymously, which had led to a surge in reporting, often by children themselves, in the past six months. He asked what steps should be taken and what additional mechanisms established to encourage children to report cases of abuse.

76. **Ms. Marcinkeviciute** (United Kingdom) said that, in 2016, her Government had pledged £50 million over five years to tackle violence against children globally. It was fully committed to tackling online child sexual exploitation and to accelerating progress on targets 16.2 and 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals. As a founding member of the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children, the United Kingdom was stepping up evidence, policy and programming to be at the forefront of the international agenda to end violence against children. Its £35 million, five-year programme to tackle female genital mutilation was the largest of any individual country. Through its £39 million programme on accelerating action to end child marriage, it was strengthening legal frameworks and supporting the associated shifts in behaviour necessary to end the practice.

77. The United Kingdom agreed that violence perpetuated poverty and was of the view that education was the best route out of poverty. She asked the Special Representative to outline her efforts to incorporate every child's right to education into her work to eradicate violence against children.

78. **Mr. Torbergsen** (Norway) said that it was essential to identify and treat destructive childhood experiences in a timely and adequate manner, otherwise they might have devastating consequences on adult life. When calling for the global study on children deprived of liberty, the General Assembly had emphasized the importance of taking into account the views and experiences of children. He asked the Special Representative how she saw that effort going forward and whether she was promoting any particular initiative in that field.

79. **Ms. Andujar** (Dominican Republic) said that, with the support of the Office of the Special Representative and UNICEF, her country had drafted and implemented a road map for the elimination of violence against children. One of its objectives was to review and update the legal framework protecting children and adolescents from violence, and to prohibit physical punishment within families. Her Government was pleased to report that a draft law was being prepared that would strengthen the institutional framework for promoting positive forms of discipline. The proposal would establish guidelines for comprehensive public policies on preventing violence

against children and supporting vulnerable families. Her delegation would like to know how the Special Representative was supporting national processes to end violence against children.

80. **Ms. Al Emadi** (Qatar) asked what challenges were faced by Member States in terms reporting and how Member States could fill the gaps to further enhance reporting.

81. **Mr. Bastida** (Spain) said that his country had a comprehensive and cross-cutting policy on the detection, prevention and eradication of violence. Combating violence against children had become a legislative and institutional goal and the childhood and adolescence protection system had been overhauled. His Government had also begun drafting a law that would provide children with comprehensive protection from violence.

82. With regard to bullying, the Spanish education system included an ethics course, and a free hotline had been set up so that children could report violence and receive assistance. Spain welcomed the establishment of a platform for gathering data on bullying and school violence at the international symposium organized in January 2017.

83. **Ms. Bhengu** (South Africa) said that, over the years, her Government had continued to strive towards building a more caring society in which all children could grow, play and learn in safe environments, free from poverty, violence, disease and food insecurity. South Africa commended the Special Representative for highlighting the important role that the corporate sector could play in the effort to eradicate violence against children. In that regard, South Africa sought to ensure the elaboration of a legally binding instrument to regulate the activities of multinational companies and private military and security companies to protect the rights of children. The heartbreaking plight of children on the move needed to be addressed in a holistic manner, and the full commitment of all States was required to ensure the success of the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration and the global compact on refugees.

84. **Ms. Al-Nussairy** (Iraq) drew attention to the child protection policy introduced by the Iraqi Government in 2017 in coordination with the UNICEF office in Baghdad and certain civil society organizations. The policy set forth a number of programmes and measures to address issues of prevention, early intervention, rehabilitation and reintegration, and provided for monitoring and reporting mechanisms and assistance measures.

85. **Ms. Santos País** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children), in response to questions relating to the opportunity of the 2030 Agenda, said that most, if not all, of the Sustainable Development Goals would be compromised unless investments were made in children. Comprehensive national plans with violence against children as a cross-cutting concern, a strong normative foundation reaffirming the commitments made by States to protect children from violence and data on violence against children were needed. Many countries did not have the data needed to understand the magnitude of the phenomenon. Many countries, however, collected important administrative data and carried out household surveys, and that work should be built upon. The capacity of national statistical offices needed to be enhanced to gather, analyse and disseminate data. The views of all children needed to be captured, while ensuring that interactions with them were ethically sound and did not cause them further harm.

86. With the adoption of the New Urban Agenda, an important road map had been established, recognizing that violence against children needed to be addressed at the municipal level. A network of mayors had been established to that end.

87. With respect to legislation, very few countries had clear safeguards on how to support child victims and witnesses. Brazil had adopted good legislation on the matter, which should be promoted elsewhere. Countries often lacked a comprehensive legal prohibition of all forms of violence against children and legislation to address online sexual abuse. Many countries risked going backwards, especially in the area of juvenile justice. In that regard, the minimum age of criminal responsibility should not be lowered.

88. In answer to the question of whether the tensions in migration and refugee situations were a form of violence, children in those situations endured psychological and physical violence and sexual abuse, often in overcrowded facilities that they could not leave at their own will. Such tensions therefore needed to be seriously addressed and brought to an end, and children needed to be protected from violence in that context.

89. As a good example of efforts to reduce poverty and violence, every child in Indonesia received a card giving them access to health and other fundamental services. In Sweden, child grants ensured that families were supported in their child-rearing responsibilities. In terms of good practices to prevent and address cyberbullying, some countries had adopted important

legislation on the matter. In Australia, an e-safety commissioner had been established to gather the views of children and help the Government to adopt the best policies to prevent such cases and promote healing.

90. With regard to partnerships and the role of private sector, she hoped that the Children's Rights and Business Principles were being promoted in all countries. The Global Child Forum being promoted by Sweden and the We Protect alliance of the United Kingdom were good examples of national initiatives to promote multi-stakeholder partnerships in the area of child rights. In the private sector, an important study had been launched in 2016 on the protection of children from sexual abuse and exploitation in tourism and travel. Efforts were being made to ensure that the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism would become mandatory.

91. On the issue of how to continue to capture the voices of children, children were the best experts on the issues affecting their lives. A study on children affected by deprivation of liberty, a current area of focus, would soon be launched and promoted in different countries in Latin America.

92. **Mr. Moustafa** (Egypt), speaking on behalf of the African Group, said that the Group believed that Sustainable Development Goal 4 could be achieved by building and upgrading educational facilities that were child, disability and gender sensitive, and by providing a safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environment for all. Although some progress had been made in terms of school enrolment rates and the gender gap in schools, numerous challenges still hindered the achievement of free universal and compulsory primary education for all.

93. In August 2017, the Assembly of the African Union had adopted Africa's Agenda for Children 2040: Fostering an Africa Fit for Children, setting out ten aspirations to be achieved by 2040. The African Union had designated the theme of the Day of the African Child in 2018 as "Leave no child behind for Africa's development". The Day of the African Child in 2017 had been devoted to the 2030 Agenda and efforts made in the region to promote sustainable development.

94. The African Union Campaign to End Child Marriage had been launched in 20 of the 30 targeted countries and continued to provide technical assistance and capacity-building to member States and other stakeholders fighting that scourge. The African Union was also developing a compendium of child marriage laws across member States. Several African States were implementing the African Partnership to End Violence against Children, using advocacy and cross-border learning to strengthen political action. The African Common Position on the African Union Campaign to End Child Marriage in Africa, the model law on ending child marriage in Southern Africa and the African Girls' Summit on Ending Child Marriage of 2015 also supported the elimination of child marriage in Africa.

95. The issue of child-headed households had come to light because of the HIV epidemic and the large number of orphaned children. Knowledge of how to prevent HIV was very low in some areas in Africa, especially among girls, and adolescent pregnancy was among the gravest health-related issues facing girls. With regard to displaced children, political will would be needed to end conflicts and allow the safe return of children. Efforts should focus on long-term solutions to mitigate the root causes of displacement, while providing children with support and ensuring family reunification.

96. The Peace and Security Council of the African Union, at its open session on ending child marriage in Africa held in June 2017, had underlined the need for member States to criminalize child marriage, while ensuring the provision of appropriate health-care services for victims, and had requested the African Union Commission to take the steps necessary to raise awareness and enhance campaigns on ending all forms of violence, abuse and exploitation of children, including child marriage. In October 2016, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict had participated in the annual African Union high-level retreat for special envoys and mediators, raising awareness among participants of concerns relating to children and armed conflict that were relevant to their work. In September 2017, the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child had released the first continental study on the impact of conflicts and crises on children in Africa.

97. Compliance with the Plan of Action adopted during the Special Session on Children was critical to the protection and promotion of children's rights, especially with respect to safe living environments, access to quality basic education, the promotion of opportunities for children and adolescents, and the elimination of discrimination and poverty. The African Group therefore advocated the elimination of female genital mutilation and forced child marriage.

98. **Ms. Sorto Rosales** (El Salvador), speaking on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), said that its member States, reaffirming that the Convention on the Rights

of the Child was the highest standard in the promotion and protection of the rights of children and adolescents, welcomed the increase in the number of ratifications of the Convention and the Optional Protocols thereto and called for its universal acceptance.

99. The countries of the region were well known for their commitment to advancing the rights of the child. Mostly middle-income countries, they were working to address vulnerabilities due to poverty, racial discrimination, gender inequality, the effects of the global financial crisis and natural disasters, violence, organized crime, the smuggling of migrants, trafficking in persons and drug trafficking.

100. Education was a human right, a social investment and one of the most important public goods in terms of achieving the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. The CELAC member States attached importance to improving the quality of and promoting equality in education with a view to eradicating poverty and inequality. Investing in children and young people was imperative to build the human capital needed to turn demographic transitions into dividends that reduced poverty and generated prosperity.

101. While welcoming the adoption of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants and the preparatory process for the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration, member States were concerned by the situations faced by children, in particular unaccompanied children and adolescents, in the context of large migratory movements. Given the complex reasons for such migration, it was important to coordinate the efforts of States and international organizations.

102. Violence was pervasive and had a lasting impact on children's lives, generating huge costs for society. The CELAC member States recognized the need to prevent and eliminate bullying, including cyberbullying, which affected a high percentage of children, compromising their health, emotional well-being and academic work. Efforts should be strengthened to develop early childhood programmes, with the support of international organizations. The international community should step up efforts to improve cooperation to assist developing countries in achieving all the internationally agreed development goals. Early childhood development policies and strategies should be supported as a way to break the cycle of poverty with the aim of achieving sustainable development.

103. Having recently celebrated the first review of the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS, the CELAC member States had committed themselves to taking all the steps necessary to gradually eliminate new HIV infections among children and mother-to-child transmission of HIV.

104. The CELAC member States underlined the importance of ensuring that the 2030 Agenda contributed to the full and effective enjoyment of the rights of the child. Advancing global efforts to eradicate poverty would require the international community's firm commitment to mobilizing all necessary resources and a multifaceted approach to ensure the promotion and protection of the human rights of children.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.